

# Built from Below: British Architecture and the Vernacular

Edited by Peter Guillery



# Built from Below: British Architecture and the Vernacular

This book extends the concept of British vernacular architecture beyond its traditional base of pre-modern domestic and industrial architecture to embrace other buildings such as places of worship, villas, hospitals, suburban semis and post-war mass housing. Engaging with wider issues of social and cultural history, this book is of use to anyone with an interest in architectural history.

Increasingly, studies of what is genuinely vernacular in British architecture look beyond a distinct category of objects or techniques. Even the greatest architecture can be better understood through heightened awareness of local or indigenous forces, by emphasising use and underlying shifts in architecture's social meaning, and by understanding all architectural design as emerging from social relationships tempered by individual creativity.

Presented in an essentially chronological sequence, from the medieval to the post-war, diverse fresh viewpoints in the chapters of this book reinforce understanding of how building design emerges not just from individual agency, that is architects, but also from the collective traditions of society.

**Peter Guillery** is Senior Historian for the Survey of London, currently a part of English Heritage. He is the author of *The Small House in Eighteenth-Century London* (2004) and of other books and articles on diverse aspects of London's architectural history. He is responsible for a forthcoming Survey of London volume on Woolwich.



# **Built from Below: British Architecture and the Vernacular**

**Edited by Peter Guillery**

First published 2011

by Routledge

2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada

by Routledge

270 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business*

This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2010.

To purchase your own copy of this or any of Taylor & Francis or Routledge's collection of thousands of eBooks please go to [www.eBookstore.tandf.co.uk](http://www.eBookstore.tandf.co.uk).

© 2011 selection and editorial material, Peter Guillery; individual chapters, the contributors

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

*British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data*

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Built from below: British architecture and the vernacular / edited by Peter Guillery.  
p. cm.

Revised papers presented in their original form at the Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain annual symposium, held 17 May 2008 at the Art Workers' Guild in London.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Architecture and society—Great Britain. 2. Vernacular architecture—Great Britain. I. Guillery, Peter. II. Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain. Symposium. III. Title: British architecture and the vernacular.

NA2543.S6B775 2010

720.941—dc22

2010001979

ISBN 0-203-84770-9 Master e-book ISBN

ISBN13: 978-0-415-56532-5 (hbk)

ISBN13: 978-0-415-56533-2 (pbk)

ISBN13: 978-0-203-84770-1 (ebk)

# Contents

	List of illustration credits	vi
	List of contributors	viii
	Preface	x
<b>1</b>	Introduction: Vernacular Studies and British Architectural History <i>Peter Guillery</i>	1
<b>2</b>	Following the Geometrical Design Path: From Ely to Jamestown, Virginia <i>Laurie Smith</i>	11
<b>3</b>	Pre-Reformation Parish Churches: A Point of View <i>P. S. Barnwell</i>	33
<b>4</b>	The Villa: Ideal Type or Vernacular Variant? <i>Elizabeth McKellar</i>	49
<b>5</b>	The York Retreat: 'A vernacular of equality' <i>Ann-Marie Akehurst</i>	73
<b>6</b>	Self-Conscious Regionalism: Dan Gibson and the Arts and Crafts House in the Lake District <i>Esmé Whittaker</i>	99
<b>7</b>	Tudoresque Vernacular and the Self-Reliant Englishman <i>Andrew Ballantyne and Andrew Law</i>	123
<b>8</b>	'The Hollow Victory' of Modern Architecture and the Quest for the Vernacular: J. M. Richards and 'the Functional Tradition' <i>Erdem Erten</i>	145
<b>9</b>	A Modernist Vernacular? The Hidden Diversity of Post-War Council Housing <i>Miles Glendinning</i>	169
<b>10</b>	From Longhouse to Live/Work Unit: Parallel Histories and Absent Narratives <i>Frances Holliss</i>	189
	Index	209

# Illustration credits

The authors and the publishers would like to thank the following individuals and institutions for giving permission to reproduce material in this book. We have made every effort to contact copyright holders, but if any errors have been made we would be happy to correct them at a later printing.

## Front Cover

© English Heritage. Derek Kendall, photographer

## Chapter 2

© Laurie Smith: 3.1–3.10

Plan of Ely Cathedral reproduced with permission from E. C. Fernie: 2.4–2.6

Plan of Barley Barn, Cressing Temple, reproduced courtesy of Essex County Council: 2.8

Plan of the Jamestown Governor's House reproduced with permission from the Timber Framers' Guild, USA: 2.10

## Chapter 3

© Amanda Daw. Adapted from plans by English Heritage: 3.1, 3.3–3.4

© Crown copyright.NMR: 3.2

## Chapter 4

The Guildhall Library, City of London: 4.1, 4.5

© Crown copyright.NMR. Derek Kendall, photographer: 4.2–4.4, 4.6–4.7

© Elizabeth McKellar: 4.8, 4.12

© National Maritime Museum: 4.9

© Peter Guillery: 4.10–4.11, 4.13–4.14

## Chapter 5

© Crown copyright.NMR: 5.1–5.2

© Ann-Marie Akehurst: 5.3–5.6, 5.10

Sessions of York: 5.7

Borthwick Institute for Historical Archives, University of York: 5.8–5.9, 5.11–5.12

## **Chapter 6**

© V&A Images/Victoria and Albert Museum, London: 6.1  
© Esmé Whittaker: 6.2–6.4, 6.6  
Raymond Whittaker, Architects Plus (UK) Ltd, Carlisle: 6.5  
© Wordsworth Trust: 6.7  
Private collection: 6.8

## **Chapter 7**

© English Heritage.NMR: 7.1, 7.3  
The trustees of the British Library: 7.2  
© Crown copyright.NMR: 7.4  
The National Library of Scotland: 7.6–7.7

## **Chapter 8**

Architectural Press Archive/RIBA Library Photographs Collection: 8.2–8.3  
© English Heritage.NMR: 8.5–8.6

## **Chapter 9**

© Miles Glendinning: 9.1, 9.3–9.9

## **Chapter 10**

© English Heritage. Drawing by Peter Dunn: 10.1  
© City of London, London Metropolitan Archives: 10.2  
© Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archive: 10.3–10.4, 10.6–10.7  
© Frances Holliss: 10.5, 10.13–10.14  
© English Heritage: 10.8  
Le Corbusier's Oeuvre Complete © FLC/ADAGP Paris and DACS, London 2009: 10.9  
© Francois Halard/trunkarchive.com: 10.10, 10.12  
© Nick Hufton: 10.11



# Contributors

**Dr Ann-Marie Akehurst** was awarded the Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain's President's Prize in September 2007, and has been granted a Postdoctoral Fellowship from the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art to prepare her book, *Architecture and Philanthropy*. She teaches in the Department of History of Art at the University of York.

**Andrew Ballantyne** is Professor of Architecture at Newcastle University, UK. His books include *Architecture, Landscape and Liberty: Richard Payne Knight and the Picturesque* (1997), *Architecture Theory* (2005) and *Rural and Urban: Architecture Between Two Cultures* (2010). His bestseller is *Architecture: A Very Short Introduction* (2002). He was chairman of the Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain between 2006 and 2009 and takes an interest in the picturesque effects of vernacular buildings in the UK and overseas.

**Dr P. S. Barnwell** teaches architectural history at Oxford University Department for Continuing Education and is a Fellow of Kellogg College. He has written on vernacular houses and farm buildings, and is a former President of the Vernacular Architecture Group. His current research interests relate to medieval parish churches and the experience of pre-Reformation worship.

**Dr Erdem Erten** trained as an architect at Middle East Technical University in Ankara, Turkey, and completed his master's and doctoral studies in Massachusetts Institute of Technology's History Theory Criticism Program in the Department of Architecture. He is now assistant head of the Department of Architecture at Izmir Institute of Technology in Turkey.

**Dr Miles Glendinning** is Director of the Scottish Centre for Conservation Studies and Reader in Architecture at Edinburgh College of Art. An active member and committee chair within DOCOMOMO-International, he has published extensively on the history of twentieth-century architecture and housing: books include *Tower Block* (with Stefan Muthesius), *A History of Scottish Architecture* (with Aonghus MacKechnie), and the recent *Modern Architect: The Life and Times of Robert Matthew*.

**Peter Guillery** is Senior Historian for the Survey of London and a committee member of the Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain. His books on London's

buildings cover subjects ranging from seventeenth-century churches to London Zoo and include *The Small House in Eighteenth-Century London* and (with Neil Burton) *Behind the Façade, London House Plans 1660–1840*. He is responsible for a forthcoming Survey of London volume on Woolwich.

**Dr Frances Holliss** is an architect, and an academic at London Metropolitan University. She completed a PhD on the architecture of home-based work, 'The workhome . . . a new building type?', in 2007. She is currently developing a design guide, as part of an Arts and Humanities Research Council Knowledge Transfer Fellowship, and writing a book titled *Beyond Live/Work: The Architecture of Home-based Work*.

**Dr Andrew Law** is a lecturer in Town Planning at Newcastle University, UK. He has held positions at Swansea University, as a Lecturer in Social and Cultural Geography, and at Newcastle, as a Research Associate on a three-year Arts and Humanities Research Council project on the History of Mock Tudor architecture (with Professor Andrew Ballantyne). He intends to extend his work on class and Englishness, and the relation of middle-class identities to suburban landscapes, architecture and heritage, to explore the rise of the middle classes in China and preferences there for new 'Western-style' architecture.

**Dr Elizabeth McKellar** BA, MSc, PhD, is Staff Tutor in Art History at the Open University. She has previously held posts at the Victoria & Albert Museum and Birkbeck College, University of London. She specializes in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century British architecture and culture. She is the author of *The Birth of Modern London: The Development and Design of the City 1660–1720* (1999) and (with Barbara Arciszewska) *Articulating British Classicism: New Approaches in Eighteenth-Century Architecture* (2004). She is currently researching a book for Yale University Press, *The Landscapes of London: The Metropolitan Environs 1650–1830*.

**Laurie Smith** is an independent early-building design researcher, specializing in geometrical design systems. Because geometry was present in the medieval curriculum he uses geometrical analysis to excavate the design methodologies of the time, a process he thinks of as design archaeology. He lectures, writes and runs practical workshops on geometrical design, most recently in the design and construction of the timber-framed Gardener's Shelter at Cressing Temple in Essex, 2008, and Dutch Settler House at Bucksteep in Massachusetts, 2009, each frame being cut and raised manually by an international team of carpenters.

**Esmé Whittaker** is Assistant Curator at the Victoria & Albert Museum. Having completed an MA at the Courtauld Institute of Art, focusing on the Aesthetic movement, she went on to gain a PhD with a thesis on the Arts and Crafts House in the Lake District.

# Preface

The Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain's annual symposium for 2008 was convened in association with the Vernacular Architecture Group to explore perspectives on the vernacular in British architecture and to improve communications between the fields of British architectural history and vernacular studies. A call for papers attracted a good response, with strong and original submissions covering gratifyingly wide ranges of chronology, topography and typology. The papers that were presented at the Art Workers' Guild in London on 17 May 2008 held together well as a procession through the centuries, dealing with highly diverse subjects, but persistently questioning and crossing habitual disciplinary boundaries. They have the potential to open up new avenues for research, and through publication here they will reach a wider audience. Rendered into essays, they are presented now much as they were delivered, in an essentially chronological sequence, from the medieval to the post-war. Since the event the material has been reworked and improved, in the light of discussion on the day and following peer review, each draft text having been read and commented on anonymously by at least two experts in its field.

Diverse fresh viewpoints uncover aspects of how building design emerges not just from individual agency, that is architects or patrons, but also from collective traditions, from society – from below. The papers do not all present new research, though some assuredly do. Others are more reflective in nature, taking existing knowledge as a point of departure to investigate and speculate about new approaches.

My introduction attempts to draw threads together, but it also has slightly older roots. It has grown out of a paper about vernacular studies that I presented at a Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain conference titled 'Histories of British Architecture: Where Next?', held at the Yale Center for British Art in November 2006. Discussion at and after that conference, and particular encouragement from Judi Loach, led to the convening of the symposium. Daniel Maudlin and Martin Cherry joined me to plan the event, select its papers and chair its sessions, and Stewart Abbott was instrumental in the organization of the day. Among many who have contributed helpful comments then and since I should like particularly to thank John Bold, Kathryn Morrison and Joanna Smith. For the illustrations, Nigel Wilkins in the National Monuments Record has been a great help. The editing of this volume has been a job beyond the day job; my deepest personal thanks are to Sumita.

Peter Guillery, November 2009

## Chapter 1

# Introduction

## Vernacular Studies and British Architectural History

*Peter Guillery*

In British architectural history the word vernacular has tended to evoke a narrow range of stereotypical forms and features – cruck frames, cross passages, scarf joints and the like. As for architectural history itself, there is still truth in W. R. Lethaby's lament of nearly a century ago: 'We have been indeed betrayed by the mysterious word Architecture away from reality into a pretence about styles and orders and proportions and periods and conception and composition'.<sup>1</sup>

Perceptions are facts, and these connotations are problems. Analyses of hybrid architectural practice and traditions across a great continuum have been hobbled, and in Britain architectural history and the study of vernacular architecture remain artificially separate disciplines. This is a separation that may have its origins in mid-twentieth-century ideologies and attitudes to class, but, if so, that is largely forgotten; it has become a habit, familiar and largely accepted by those on the inside, of no interest to those on the outside. That is part of what's wrong. Architectural history, as a study of society, as ethnography, is (as my former colleague, Nicholas Cooper, is wont to say) too important to be left to architectural historians. Moreover, as Nancy Stieber has cautioned in an American context, 'the success of architectural history as an autonomous discipline may in the end be measured not by the quality of our internal dialogues, but by the degree to which others need and want to benefit from the way we make evident the value of building and site as historical evidence'.<sup>2</sup>

Increasingly, encouragingly, and from both directions, studies of what is vernacular about architecture in Britain look beyond distinct categories of objects, forms or techniques. Rather they are beginning to explore a point of view, one that sees the local, indigenous, ordinary, everyday, popular, nostalgic or numerous. From this vantage point, seen from below, all architecture is vernacular, more or less. It is simply a matter of things looking different from different positions – parallax. There is also another perspective, that from which the word vernacular is essentially meaningless in a democratic view of architecture. But, following Marcel Vellinga, that is a

next stage: 'It is only when the vernacular, like the modern, the popular, the colonial or the informal, has become analytically obsolete, that its existence and importance will truly have been recognized'.<sup>3</sup> And, it might be added, once the concept of the vernacular is obsolete, then it will be possible to turn to the materiality and specificity of particular buildings with a fresh view of what sets them apart.

Conventional British definitions of the vernacular break on the rock of modernity, specifically the Industrial Revolution, but that transformation did not eliminate communal or non-academic approaches to the design of buildings. All buildings partake somehow or other of the 'traditional', generally held as a defining characteristic of the vernacular. For the mining of this seam there is great potential in an extension of the concept of the vernacular beyond its usual base of pre-modern domestic and industrial architecture to embrace other buildings – places of worship, villas, hospitals, suburban semis, post-war mass housing or entire built landscapes. This potential has been widely realized in North American architectural history and, to be fair in a British context, there is a recent volume on Scotland's buildings in an explicitly ethnographic series.<sup>4</sup>

An equivalent English volume may seem inconceivable, but there are strong English precedents for the incorporation of the everyday into the mainstream study of architectural history. These come through a third major historiographical thread that must be set alongside the archaeological and the art historical, both cheaply disparaged in my binary opening. A plainly historical approach to architecture is every bit as venerable, and has been no less successful. In fact it has been resurgent in recent decades as inclusive outlooks have spread, as, for example, through the Pevsner Architectural Guides series. From this historical tangent, it is most evident, the separation of buildings into vernacular and non-vernacular subsets makes little sense.

For this alternative inheritance, historical architectural history, the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (RCHME) long carried the torch. Its warrant of 1908 licensed investigation of 'the life and times of the people in England'. This was profitably exploited in the later decades of the twentieth century, integrating archaeological and art-historical approaches in a shift away from inventory towards a focus on the socio-economics of function, class and status, a move that was mirrored by the sister commissions in Scotland and Wales.<sup>5</sup> The Survey of London, with its separately derived public-service-based inclusivity, was brought fittingly alongside into the RCHME upon the abolition of the Greater London Council in 1986, and then launched itself into chronicling the sheds of Docklands. The missions have not been renounced and, since institutional merger in 1999, 'life and times' work continues from within English Heritage, its vigour unstilled, and in some respects renewed.

Victorian terraced houses in northern towns provide an instance. In the face of government-sponsored urban clearances (the Housing Market Renewal Initiative) many were under threat in the first years of the twenty-first century. Such buildings had rarely been well studied in their local contexts, so new survey was undertaken.<sup>6</sup> Other recent synthetic state-agency work on largely post-Industrial Revolution vernacular subjects includes study of the history of shops and shopping,

a corpus of studies on workshops, and surveys of urban places of worship, seaside towns, Scottish farm buildings and London's humbler Georgian houses.<sup>7</sup>

Boundaries between vernacular studies and 'polite' architectural history have, of course, been ignored or broken down much more widely. There are the revised Pevsners, and there is the planning-based work of the period-defined national amenity societies, unavoidably catholic in its remit. Numerous more purely academic studies have questioned categories more overtly, in some more recent cases through openness to a 'material culture' approach.<sup>8</sup> Ever since its formation in 1956 the Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain has made sporadic forays towards bridging the disciplinary divide,<sup>9</sup> and the Vernacular Architecture Group has lately grown increasingly open to questions about its proper remit.<sup>10</sup>

Needless to say, some mainstream historians, though too few, do use ordinary buildings well to anchor social histories of subjects as diverse as Georgian market towns and East End tenement life.<sup>11</sup> To one side, a great maverick, was Colin Ward (1924–2010) – this volume would be incomplete without a paean to his work. Ward worked as an architect and a planner, and, all the while, as a pragmatic anarchist. He wrote widely on the history of popular self-build and in support of Walter Segal and his self-build housing system. From *Housing: An Anarchist Approach* (1976) to *Cotters and Squatters: The Hidden History of Housing* (2004), Ward grappled with aspects of architectural history that almost all others have ignored.<sup>12</sup> One aspect that has been, strangely, both fêted and ignored is inter-war private housing. J. M. Richards led the way with *The Castles on the Ground* (1946), discussed here by Erdem Erten. In Britain's suburbs Richards found 'a true contemporary vernacular'.<sup>13</sup> *Dunroamin: The Suburban Semi and its Enemies* (1981)<sup>14</sup> was among a number of studies that followed, but, a further quarter century on, the lead article in the 2006 volume of *Architectural History*, based on the Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain's preceding annual lecture, was Gavin Stamp's barnstorming polemic on the need for serious attention to inter-war neo-Tudor housing.<sup>15</sup> It is shocking that such a call should have been necessary. The gauntlet has been picked up, and Ward's perspectives echoed, in this volume by Andrew Ballantyne and Andrew Law. Their chapter on the 'Tudoresque' is a first fruit from a larger research project on 'mock Tudor'.

That subject is a good example of how the study of buildings that pertain to social groups that are not dominant or elite can draw out the strength of precedent, and focus attention on cultural conservatism as a socially dynamic force. Traditional building practice may often be a product of an absence of choice – what is conventionally vernacular. But tradition in the presence of choice is no less vernacular.<sup>16</sup> Resistance to fashion can be as significant as susceptibility to fashion. Further, receptivity on the part of the historian to nostalgia as a major cultural force highlights the elusiveness of any defining line between the vernacular and the neo-vernacular. The ambivalent character of vernacular revivalism is addressed here in Esmé Whittaker's chapter on Dan Gibson and in Erdem Erten's on Richards. The post-war ideological milieu that led some modernist architects and critics to react against internationalism and to aspire to anti-heroic anonymity was significant in relation to the founding of the Vernacular Architecture Group in 1952, and some

architects soon went further – the Smithsons to speak of an ‘as found’ aesthetic, and James Stirling to view Victorian terraced houses in northern towns sympathetically and as ‘vernacular’.<sup>17</sup> But nostalgia is nostalgia and history is history. The historian’s task is not the same as the architect’s. The aim is not approbation of one or another kind of building, but understanding. Indeed,

Searching for places of identity that may have survived the destructive power of rationalization is an epistemological trap. It entails a nostalgic idealization of a past that never actually existed. There is no hidden liberating potential lingering in the discovery of hitherto suppressed vernacular spatiality. Moreover, it would be naïve to assume that modernity is reversible.<sup>18</sup>

Nonetheless, approaches towards understanding the importance of the ordinary or everyday remain one important side of vernacular studies. At the same time and on the other hand, even the greatest and most monumental architecture can be better understood through heightened awareness of local or indigenous forces, by emphasizing reception, use and underlying shifts in architecture’s social meaning, and by understanding all architectural design as emerging from social relationships tempered by individual creativity, that is by interpreting architecture as a ‘field’ in the sense introduced by Pierre Bourdieu and anticipated by J. M. Richards.<sup>19</sup> The vernacular has been traced in some of modernity’s most archetypal sites,<sup>20</sup> and Frances Holliss and Miles Glendinning carry this approach forwards here, ranging from Le Corbusier to T. Dan Smith.

For the other end of modernity, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Elizabeth McKellar does the same, placing Inigo Jones’s Queen’s House in a context of suburban villa building in Greenwich. Another instance from that period illustrates a different way that the low can underpin the high. In London in the 1630s a humble church layout with an innovative centralized plan was designed to suit the doctrinal beliefs of one ideological group, moderate Calvinists, only to be adopted, seemingly embraced, by ascendant Puritans when and after it came into use in 1642. Following the Restoration the type was subtly appropriated and modified by neo-Laudians, and, through further vicissitudes, architectural meaning had been almost completely turned round by the 1720s. What had been conceived as an exemplary auditory for low reformed worship came to be projected as a High Anglican model, Hawksmoor adapting and enlarging the modest mid-seventeenth-century interior on a monumental scale at St George in the East, one of the 1711 Commissioners’ churches. Far from humble, these were symbols of power and pious munificence that were meant to intimidate, to appear ‘enormous when compared to the neighbouring diminutive houses’.<sup>21</sup>

Whether expressed through architectural style or otherwise, and however political or piratical, such continuity is a force that constructively roots architecture in society. It may be self-consciously ideological, as in the myth-laden regionalism of Dan Gibson. That represents a phenomenon, contextualism, of which Hawksmoor was also a master. This is an important aspect of the vernacular, but contextualism

and the vernacular are not one and the same. Contextualism implies an architect's *de haut en bas* decision to 'go native' rather than an inescapable entanglement with place and society. The vernacular as opposed to the neo-vernacular is, in fact, almost the opposite of the contextual – it is what is taken as read. In different times and places, that might apply to greater or lesser parts of the design process. Technical procedures may be comparatively subconscious and quietly universal. Geometry has been widely used in the interpretation of medieval architecture, but Laurie Smith's chapter here breaks interesting new ground through a comparative approach that links buildings as diverse as cathedrals, barns and small houses, across five centuries and two continents. Emphasis on continuities and the taken-for-granted also gives rise to questions about patterns of use and the nature of domestic space, and some of these are addressed in Frances Holliss's chapter, which draws, significantly, on oral history.

As Colin Davies, a professor of architecture, has put it: 'Architects, by definition, cannot do vernacular, they can only observe it, admire it and try to learn from it. It is the state of innocence from which architecture has lapsed irrevocably'.<sup>22</sup> But, as Davies takes pains to point out throughout the insightful polemic from which this quote is taken, architecture only gets off the drawing board as a response to demand, and demand arises from society. Architects and architectural historians have connived in underplaying demand to perpetuate a supply-side outlook. Notwithstanding mid-twentieth-century modernist mythology (Ayn Rand's *Fountainhead* of 1943 its archetype), there is never pure intention. Famously, Nikolaus Pevsner defined architecture (also in 1943) as an intentional enterprise with an aesthetic purpose: 'A bicycle shed is a building: Lincoln Cathedral is a piece of architecture. Nearly everything that encloses space on a scale sufficient for a human being to move in is a building; the term architecture applies only to buildings designed with a view to aesthetic appeal'.<sup>23</sup> If architecture is understood sociologically as a 'field', as arising not just from supply, but also from both demand and reception, Pevsner's dictum with its emphasis on design loses bite. It is not necessary to hold that anyone might ever find a bicycle shed more aesthetically appealing than Lincoln Cathedral to accept that any building, even a bicycle shed, can be understood as architecture. Architectural history and buildings history (a clumsy term that has some, principally archaeological, currency) are one and the same thing. Goethe's description of the Villa Rotonda from 1786 exemplifies the hermeneutical point:

It is a square block, enclosing a round hall lit from above. On each of the four sides a broad flight of steps leads up to a portico of Corinthian columns. Architecture has never, perhaps, achieved a greater degree of luxury. Far more space has been lavished on the stairs and porticos than on the house itself, in order to give each side the impressive appearance of a temple. The house itself is a habitation rather than a home.<sup>24</sup>

An attempt to embrace all architecture in an architectural 'history from below' approach might learn from postcolonial scholarship and borrow the notion of the subaltern, a word that may sound odd in relation to architecture, but one that is



usefully less specific than terms like peasant or working class. It is also useful simply by association. In the same way that South Asian subaltern studies have set out to 'provincialize' Europe, that is not to resort to nativism or anti-modernism, but to attempt to shift Europe from a paradigmatic position in relation to Indian history,<sup>25</sup> architectural history might 'provincialize' canonical or elite architecture, such as medieval cathedrals, Baroque churches, Palladian villas, or modernist 'icons', not to denigrate or ignore them, but to engage them through new and wider ethnographic approaches. These might include the study of resistance, but that can be understood in many nuanced forms, as Colin Ward's writings illustrate. Ann-Marie Akehurst's assessment of the Quakers' approach to building takes steps in this direction. Eighteenth-century hospital-building Quakers were certainly not peasants, but they were subaltern in significant, indeed self-conscious, ways.

In dealing with subordinate subjects, as Akehurst and Elizabeth McKellar both show, assumptions of architectural trickle-down really are not good enough. The Whiggish historical framework of modernity has helped obscure, even repress, what did not change and what it meant, the endurance of the communal as opposed to the social, in the sense of the distinction derived from Ferdinand Tönnies's *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (1887) – crudely, consensual and inherited forms of association as opposed to those externally imposed. The eighteenth century is the prime example of this, but P. S. Barnwell's speculative chapter suggests that aspects of much earlier architecture may have been similarly occluded, that medieval parish-church design is not necessarily best understood as simply having a reduced High Church character, and that the study of such churches could be opened up through new (and fundamentally interdisciplinary) ethnographic approaches that might unbutton antiquarianism and address the use and experience of places of worship. Outside this volume, a similar engagement with 'subaltern' architecture characterizes Aileen Reid's work on co-partnership housing,<sup>26</sup> emphasizing local determinants and the independent agency of ordinary people in revisiting the Garden City movement. A further example of the potential of this kind of work emerged at a Vernacular Architecture Group conference in 2005 titled 'Diffusion and Invention: Vernacular Building in England and the New World'. Numerous speakers, both English and American, emphasized strong divergence between North American and English building traditions during the seventeenth century, the speed of the separation laying bare local conditions and humble agency as crucial. Returning to the twentieth century and this volume, Miles Glendinning shows that even in the hugely centralized post-war mass-housing drive, there were powerful subaltern inflections.

There is another deeper sense in which postcolonial thought might be relevant to architectural history and its understanding of the vernacular. Architectural historians are especially blessed, or cursed, in that many of the discipline's objects of enquiry, its indispensable documents, are not simply in the public domain, they *are* the public domain – the sphere or environment in which ordinary people live. Like it or not, architectural historians deal in public history; scholarship on the human environment cannot disengage from political substance and ramifications. For all people living in and visiting Britain, its buildings are its past in the present, history incarnate in everyday experience. Dolores Hayden's analysis of different sized 'homes' in

*The Power of Place* long ago indicated how much those experiences might contrast.<sup>27</sup> Through the exigencies of state funding administered through the Arts and Humanities Research Council, developer funding of building recording, conservation plans, and, not least, the internet and the wikification of knowledge, British architectural historians are learning that audiences as much as subjects can be, even need to be, 'vernacular'. There is nothing to fear in this. The discipline is unusually well placed to explain and frame diversity and hybrid identities. What should perhaps matter most in this discourse is that rigorous historical analysis of aspects of the whole built environment should stand firm alongside a tendency to accept that anybody's and everybody's account is valid. History should not cede precedence to individual memory. An old building, if nothing else, is a reminder that there are historical facts.

For some people personal or family histories of migration and rootlessness tend to mean that heritage is sought and defined not in the monumental, but in ephemeral and mobile aspects of material culture. Raphael Samuel observed that 'the built environment is apt to give a privileged place to the powerful, and indeed very often to leave them as the only presence in the field'.<sup>28</sup> This is true, but only up to a point, and it is important to joust with that word 'apt'. Some groups conceal their architectural presence, and others assert theirs, often only gradually emerging from concealment. This can be charted through the history of places of worship in London's East End. Resistance/assimilation and discretion/assertion dichotomies are readily tracked, from seventeenth-century Nonconformity, to emergent Irish Roman Catholicism, to Anglo- and immigrant Judaism, to Islam and Pentecostalist Christianity.<sup>29</sup> There are obvious dangers in making such cross-cultural comparisons that confront difficult questions bearing on class and race, but these are perhaps not as great as the dangers of not making them. Further, a focus on buildings makes it less likely that a crucial distinction that is sometimes obscured in emphases on identity is not lost to view. The disproportionate survival rates of old buildings, elite architecture invariably faring better than humble, are a salutary reminder that the assertion of identity and celebration of diversity cannot be substitutes for the achievement of equality – beware that 'epistemological trap'.

There are, then, three strategies described here for universalizing the vernacular in the study of British architecture: emphasis on the importance of the ordinary or everyday; 'provincialization' or re-contextualization of the great and monumental; and concentration on the historian's public role. Doubtless, these might be differently expressed, and other routes divined. But however the field might be strategically divided, there are and will continue to be basic methodological problems, and possibilities. To return to Nicholas Cooper's perception and Nancy Stieber's warning, other historians are not paying enough attention. Too often there is a reluctance or a failure to see that buildings can provide insights into how people thought. Perhaps this is due to a post-postmodernist view that only words can do that, but it is more likely just a combination of old habits dying hard, and, above all, a failure of communication on the parts of architectural historians and vernacularists. The primary evidential value of buildings does need to be affirmed.<sup>30</sup> Through careful analysis buildings can reveal much about lives and social forces that is otherwise obscure. In particular, in a vernacular context, humble buildings can shed light on

aspects of social history where documentation is otherwise thin. Sometimes there are no words. Sometimes there are words and they obfuscate. Sometimes, it must be conceded, methodical empirical analysis of architectural fabric also obfuscates. But it can be illuminating. Caution is, of course, necessary; 'built from below' may often hang as an unanswered question. In many situations not only is speculative reconstruction necessary, but what survives is often so unrepresentative that translating built form into cultural insights depends on a good understanding of historical context. This is sometimes difficult. Indeed, it is theoretically impossible, though awareness that the past will always be a place to which we cannot go will not deter us from trying to get there.

Cautious empirical analyses characterize the best vernacular studies. Edward Robert's *Hampshire Houses* (2003) is an excellent recent example of traditional vernacularist methods and conceptual hierarchies. Roberts concludes his wide-ranging survey with two fundamental questions – what do these houses reveal about ways of living? and do changes in the buildings help explain social changes? To answer these, he says, more basic research is needed. Amen.

For the early-modern period there is great untapped potential in the study of the humblest buildings that no longer survive, but for which we do have visual and documentary records. More widely, some of the strengths of vernacularist or archaeological building analysis (quantitative data collection, scientific dating, constructional awareness) could more frequently and fruitfully come together with architectural-historical strengths (documentary, visual, expository and synthetic skills) to encourage tentative answers to social, economic and wide landscape questions to rise above formalism.<sup>31</sup> Much has been and is being done, but there are inevitable insecurities, financial, professional and institutional, and, to return to the basic organizing principle behind this volume, there is certainly scope for much greater integration of vernacular studies with mainstream academic architectural history.

In attempting that integration this volume is also fundamentally about catholicity and breadth. As Martin Cherry said in his concluding remarks at the end of the Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain's annual symposium for 2008, it is about making all kinds of buildings meaningful parts of historical interpretation.

## Notes

- 1 William Richard Lethaby, *Form in Civilization: Collected Papers on Art and Labour* (London, 1922), p. 25.
- 2 Nancy Stieber, 'Learning from Interdisciplinarity', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 64/4 (2005), p. 417.
- 3 Marcel Vellinga, 'Engaging the Future: Vernacular Architecture Studies in the Twenty-First Century', in *Vernacular Architecture in the Twenty-First Century: Theory, Education and Practice*, eds Lindsay Asquith and Marcel Vellinga (London, 2006), pp. 81–94 (p. 94).
- 4 eds Geoffrey Stell, John Shaw and Susan Storrier, *Scotland's Buildings*, Scottish Life and Society: A Compendium of Scottish Ethnology III (East Linton, 2005).
- 5 See, especially, Eric Mercer, *English Vernacular Houses* (London, 1975); Peter Smith, *Houses of the Welsh Countryside: A Study in Historical Geography* (London, 1975). Related RCHME publications that followed included: Roger Leech, *Early Industrial Housing: The Trinity Area of Frome* (London, 1981); Sarah Pearson, *Rural Houses of the Lancashire Pennines, 1560–1760* (London, 1985); Lucy Caffyn, *Workers' Housing in West Yorkshire, 1750–1920* (London, 1986);

- Colum Giles, *Rural Houses of West Yorkshire, 1400–1830* (London, 1986); David Black, Ian Goodall and Ian Pattison, *Houses of the North York Moors* (London, 1987); J. T. Smith, *English Houses 1200–1800: The Hertfordshire Evidence* (London, 1992); Sarah Pearson, *The Medieval Houses of Kent: An Historical Analysis* (London, 1994).
- 6 See, for example, Adam Menuge, *Ordinary Landscapes, Special Places: Anfield, Breckfield and the Growth of Liverpool's Suburbs* (Swindon, 2008).
  - 7 Kathryn A. Morrison, *English Shops and Shopping: An Architectural History* (London, 2003); eds P. S. Barnwell, Marilyn Palmer and Malcolm Airs, *The Vernacular Workshop: From Craft to Industry, 1400–1900* (York, 2004); Peter Guillery, *The Small House In Eighteenth-Century London: A Social and Architectural History* (London, 2004); John Minnis, *Religion and Place in Leeds* (Swindon, 2007); Sarah Brown, *Religion and Place: Liverpool's Historic Places of Worship* (Swindon, 2008); Allan Brodie and Gary Winter, *England's Seaside Resorts* (Swindon, 2007); Miles Glendinning and Susanna Wade Martins, *Buildings of the Land: Scotland's Farms 1750–2000* (Edinburgh, 2009).
  - 8 For example, ed. Neil Burton, *Georgian Vernacular* (London, 1995); Matthew H. Johnson, *Housing Culture: Traditional Architecture in an English Landscape* (London, 1993); eds Barbara Arciszewska and Elizabeth McKellar, *Articulating British Classicism: New Approaches to Eighteenth-Century Architecture* (Aldershot, 2004); eds John Styles and Amanda Vickery, *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture in Britain and North America, 1700–1830* (London, 2006).
  - 9 See, for example, Ronald Brunskill, 'Vernacular Architecture: A Review of Recent Literature', *Architectural History*, 26 (1983), pp. 105–12.
  - 10 Instances include, Nicholas Cooper, 'Display, Status and the Vernacular Tradition', *Vernacular Architecture*, 33 (2002), pp. 28–33; Daniel Maudlin, 'Regulating the Vernacular: The Impact of Building Regulations in the Eighteenth-Century Highland Planned Village', *Vernacular Architecture*, 35 (2004), pp. 40–9; Adrian Green, 'Confining the Vernacular: The Seventeenth-Century Origins of a Mode of Study', *Vernacular Architecture*, 38 (2007), pp. 1–7.
  - 11 See, for example, Peter Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in the Provincial Town, 1660–1770* (Oxford, 1989); Jerry White, *Rothschild Buildings: Life in an East-End Tenement Block, 1887–1920* (London, 2003); Gillian Tindall, *The House by the Thames and the People Who Lived There* (London, 2006); Sarah Wise, *The Blackest Streets: The Life and Death of a Victorian Slum* (Oxford, 2008).
  - 12 For a general assessment of Ward's thinking that includes a summary of his approach to the history of housing, see Stuart White, 'Making Anarchism Respectable? The Social Philosophy of Colin Ward', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 12/1 (Feb. 2007), pp. 11–28. I am grateful to Daniel Guillery for drawing my attention to this article.
  - 13 J. M. Richards, *The Castles on the Ground: The Anatomy of Suburbia*, 2nd edn (London, 1973), p. 18.
  - 14 Paul Oliver, Ian Davis and Ian Bentley, *Dunroamin: The Suburban Semi and its Enemies* (London, 1981).
  - 15 Gavin Stamp, 'Neo-Tudor and its Enemies', *Architectural History*, 49 (2006), pp. 1–33. See also, for emphasis on pluralism, Alan Powers, *Britain: Modern Architectures in History* (London, 2007).
  - 16 Vellinga, 'Engaging the Future'; Dell Upton, 'The Tradition of Change', *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review*, 5/1 (1993), pp. 9–15.
  - 17 Mark Crinson, 'The Uses of Nostalgia: Stirling and Gowan's Preston Housing', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 65/2 (2006), pp. 216–37.
  - 18 eds Maiken Umbach and Bernd Hüppauf, *Vernacular Modernism: Heimat, Globalization, and the Built Environment* (Stanford, Calif., 2005), p. 2.
  - 19 See Hélène Lipstadt, 'Sociology: Bourdieu's Bequest', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 64/4 (2005), pp. 433–6.
  - 20 Umbach and Hüppauf, *Vernacular Modernism*.
  - 21 James Peller Malcolm, *Londinium Redivivum; or, An Ancient History and Modern Description of London*, 4 vols (London, 1803–7), III, p. 477. What precedes is summarized from Peter Guillery,

- 'Suburban Models, or, Calvinism and Continuity in London's Seventeenth-Century Church Architecture', *Architectural History*, 48 (2005), pp. 69–106.
- 22 Colin Davies, *The Prefabricated Home* (London, 2005), p. 199.
- 23 Nikolaus Pevsner, *An Outline of European Architecture*, 7th edn (Harmondsworth, 1963), p. 15. See also, Peter Guillery, 'Bicycle Sheds Revisited, or: Why are Houses Interesting?', in *Architecture and Interpretation*, eds Sandy Heslop and Christine Stevenson (Woodbridge, 2011), forthcoming.
- 24 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Italian Journey [1786–1788]*, trans. W. H. Auden and Elizabeth Mayer (Harmondsworth, 1962), 22 Sept. 1786.
- 25 Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, 2000).
- 26 Aileen Reid, *Brentham: A History of the Pioneer Garden Suburb, 1901–2001* (London, 2000).
- 27 Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (London, 1995), p. 28.
- 28 Raphael Samuel, *Island Stories: Unravelling Britain*, Theatres of Memory II (Guildford, 1998), pp. 367–8.
- 29 See 'Religion and Place in Tower Hamlets', a Building Exploratory project with English Heritage and Arts Council England [www.religionandplace.org.uk].
- 30 For notable attempts to do this see the published papers from 'Architecture and History', a joint symposium of the Royal Historical Society and the Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain, 2002, in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th series, 13 (2003), pp. 187–392. See also, Christopher Dyer, 'History and Vernacular Architecture', *Vernacular Architecture*, 28 (1997), pp. 1–8.
- 31 For an exemplary methodological model see Nicholas Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry, 1480–1680* (London, 1999), and for pioneering multi-disciplinarity, see Helen Clarke, Sarah Pearson, Mavis Mate and Keith Parfitt, *Sandwich: The 'Completest Medieval Town in England': A Study of the Town and Port from its Origins to 1600* (Oxford, 2010), forthcoming.

## Chapter 2

# Following the Geometrical Design Path

From Ely to Jamestown, Virginia

*Laurie Smith*

### Introduction

A building's design is the conceptual foundation on which its tangible form, visual appearance, function and subsequent history are all built so it follows logically that we comprehend historic buildings more fully if we understand how they were designed. However, the single greatest obstacle to understanding is that, as people of the twenty-first century, we no longer speak the design languages of earlier times. This is particularly true of the medieval period because the spatial proportioning inherent in geometrical design is largely absent from the design languages of the present which are, in general, dominated by numerical dimensions. In seeking a deeper understanding of medieval buildings and the mindset of their designers it is an essential first step to relearn the design language of the period.

This chapter arises from the tangible presence of geometrical, compass-drawn symbols carved into the fabric of Ely Cathedral, most prominently in the tympanum of the Monks' Door at the east end of the nave's south aisle. An explanation of the symbol's fundamental properties shows that they have applications in building design. The argument is that these carved geometrical symbols represent the geometries used in the cathedral's design, in the layout of the Monks' Door and nave floor in particular, and that their presence is a conscious statement to that effect. Sequential diagrams show how the intrinsic geometrical properties of the symbols can be applied, first to design the door itself and, second, after a review of the cathedral's measured record, in the design of the nave's large-scale linear floor proportions, including the alternating placement of cylindrical and composite piers in the arcade alignments.

Analysis of the spatial configuration of the Ely nave floor demonstrates that a triple linear development based on the Ely geometrical symbol generates the nave's floor geometry. The application of this geometrical design system can

be found in other buildings and these are, in chronological order, Prior Crauden's Chapel in Ely, the Barley Barn at Cressing Temple in Essex, 17 Court Street at Nayland in Suffolk, and the Governor's House at Jamestown in Virginia. While other examples exist where the symbol is duplicated and, in another case, developed into a five-symbol linear floor, the focus of this chapter is on examples that embody the symbol's triplication, enabling a specific design geometry to be followed over time.

In close proximity to Ely Cathedral, Prior Crauden's Chapel features an identical linear development to the Ely nave floor, though on a very small scale, in the design of two groups of tiles flanking the image of Adam and Eve, the focal point of the chapel's overall floor-tile scheme. The triple linear geometries defining the Ely nave arcading and Prior Crauden's Chapel floor tiles can also be found in the floor plans of the Barley Barn, built by the Knights Templar, in the floor of 17 Court Street, a pair of semi-detached medieval hall houses and in the footprint of the Governor's House. Despite the intervention of the Atlantic, these examples have a regional connection, Ely Cathedral and Prior Crauden's Chapel being in modern Cambridgeshire, the Barley Barn and 17 Court Street in adjacent Essex and Suffolk respectively, while the Jamestown Governor's House is known to have been built by carpenters who sailed to America from the Suffolk area. Jamestown apart, the greatest distances between the examples are Ely to Cressing or Nayland, each forty miles as the crow flies, or a two-day horse ride away, while Cressing and Nayland are just fifteen miles or a day's walk apart. The time scale, from 1135 for the Monks' Door to 1610 for the Governor's House, spans a period of four hundred and seventy-five years. The survival of this geometrical design system over such a long period and its application in the design of buildings of significantly different status, function and scale raises serious questions regarding our modern understanding and usage of the word vernacular.

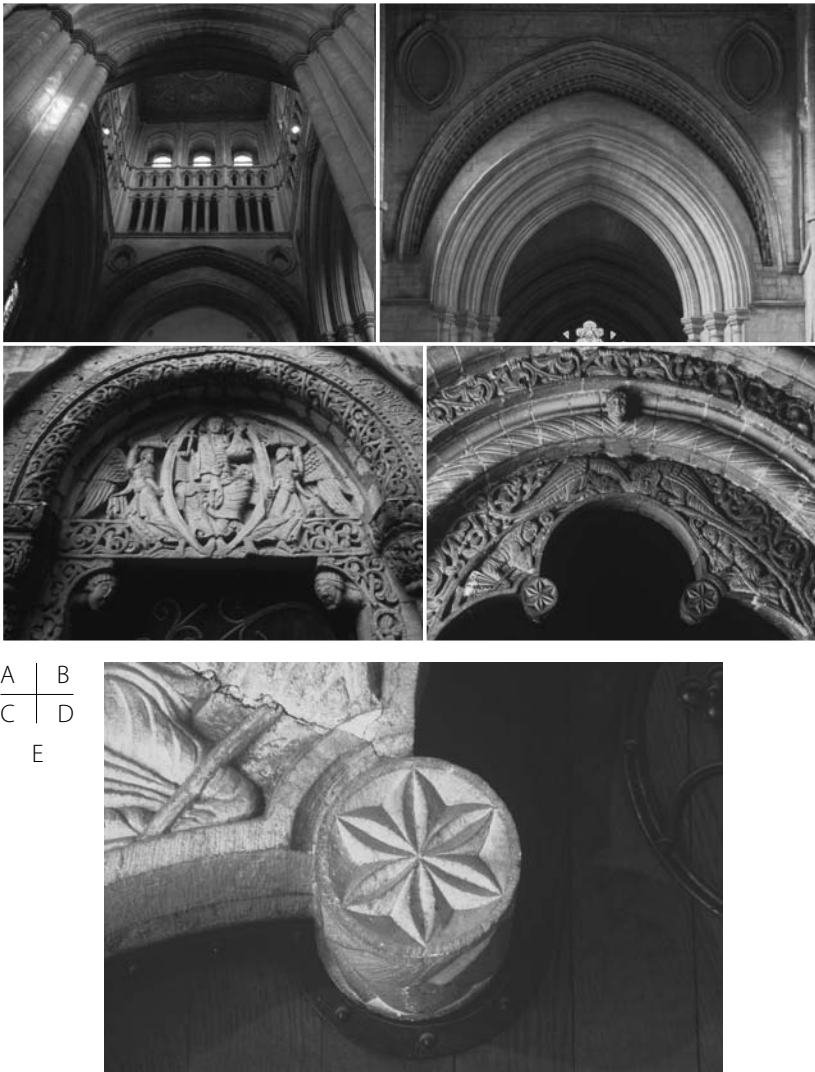
## **Geometrical symbols at Ely Cathedral**

The visual language of Ely Cathedral speaks loudly of compass geometry: semi-circular arcade vaults, single semi-circular arc and interlaced semi-circular blind arcading, cylindrical piers, half-cylindrical pilasters (on cylindrical and composite piers) and a range of compass-drawn geometrical symbols.

There are fifteen examples of stone-cut geometrical symbols that can be seen by an observer from the floor of the cathedral, while two further examples can be seen at triforium level. The symbols fall into two categories, the vesica piscis in which two circles of identical radius each pass through the axis of the other to form an almond-shaped mandorla and the daisy wheel, so called by modern frame carpenters, in which six circles of equal radius are drawn around the circumference of a seventh to intersect in the familiar form of a six-petal radial flower. The triforium examples are of four- and five-petal wheels, making seventeen symbols in all.

Entering the cathedral through the western tower entrance the eye is taken immediately by the black-and-white marble maze that fills the entire tower floor and then, as the eye adjusts to the interior, the linear perspective of the nave stretching away, through the light from the crossing's octagon, into the chancel, on to the altar and, finally, to the east window. Observing visitors entering the cathedral

it is noticeable that though many are intrigued by the maze, and some follow its track to the centre, very few look up into the western tower itself. Here, in the spandrels of the tower's four high arches, eight large high-relief vesicas can be seen, placed so that they touch arc to arc at right angles in the tower's four corners (Figure 2.1a). Entering the nave there are two further vesicas high above in the spandrels of the arch, identical to those of the western tower, like eyes scanning the length of the nave from west to east (Figure 2.1b). There is a further vesica in the tympanum of the Prior's Door where, flanked by angels, it acts as a mandorla surrounding the figure of Christ in Judgement, the central focus of the door's elaborate sculptural scheme (Figure 2.1c). This door is in the south aisle of the nave where it once gave access to the now lost cloister, its carving viewed from the cloister side.



## 2.1

Ely Cathedral, vesicas and daisy wheels.  
a: vesicas in west tower.  
b: vesicas above nave west arch.  
c: the Prior's Door tympanum with a vesica surrounding the figure of Christ in Judgement.  
d: the Monks' Door tympanum with two daisy wheels at the cusps in the tripartite arch.  
e: detail of d.

A	B
C	D
E	

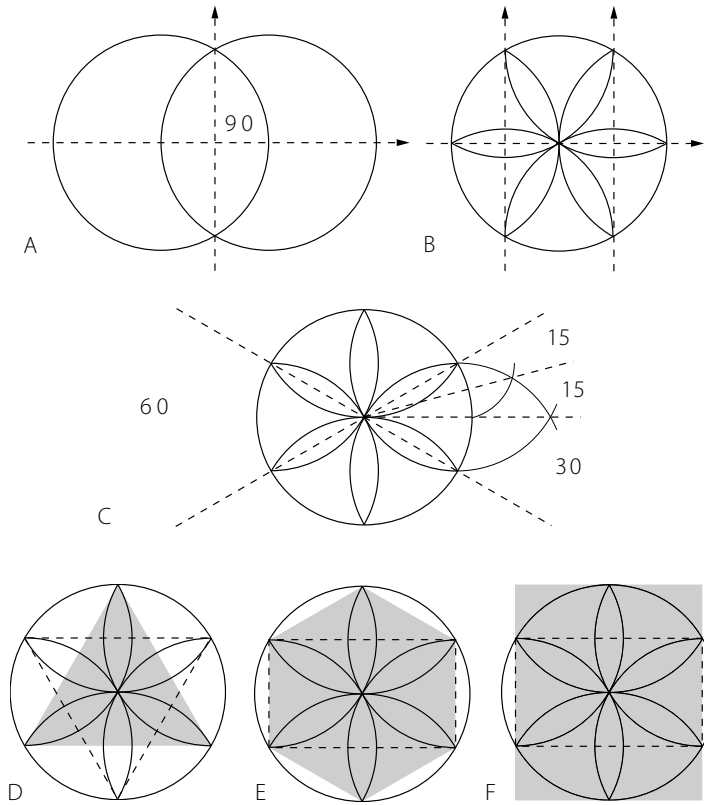


The Monks' Door, which is also in the south aisle facing into a small surviving remnant of the cloister, features two daisy wheels, placed at the focal intersections of its tripartite arch, beneath another complex sculptural scheme (Figure 2.1d). The precision compass arcs of the wheel's carving are clearly visible (Figure 2.1e). In the north-eastern corner of the north aisle a further door gives access to a spiral stair rising to the north-aisle roof walk and the Octagon. This door, although much simpler in its sculptural scheme and at a humbler scale, nevertheless also has two daisy wheels carved on cylindrical drums to mark the focal points in the arch profile. Finally, at triforium level, at the entrance to the stained-glass museum, there is a door with a single drum showing a four-petal wheel on one side and a five-petal wheel on the other. The drum from the opposite side of this door arch has been lost. The vesica and daisy-wheel symbols that are clearly visible in public areas of the cathedral total seventeen. There may be more and it is open to speculation that, before its collapse in 1322, the central crossing tower may have had a similar geometrical scheme to that of the western tower. The important recognition is that geometrical symbols abound at Ely at a variety of scales and locations and are an emphatic geometrical presence. All are cut in stone, all are clearly integral elements of greater sculptural schemes and, significantly, all arise from compass geometry. In seeking evidence of geometrical design methods at Ely it is therefore sensible to consider compass-based systems and to recognize the geometrical function of the symbols.

The primary function of the vesica piscis (Figure 2.2a) is to generate perpendiculars. If two circles are drawn on a line so that they intersect, a second line drawn through the intersections will cut the first line at 90°. The daisy wheel embodies two vesicas and can therefore generate two parallel perpendiculars (Figure 2.2b). The daisy wheel's first function is as a source of 60° angles that can be bisected to give 30°, 15° and so on (Figure 2.2c) while an adjacent 60° and 30° combine to give a right angle. The daisy wheel's second function is as a means of determining triangulation and proportioned areas. Because the wheel is compass drawn to a single radius, it follows that all points at which arcs meet are an identical distance apart. Therefore, if three adjacent points are connected the result is an equilateral triangle. Because the circle's axis occupies a central point the remaining two are inevitably on the circle's circumference. It is clear that a total of six equilateral triangles could be constructed if all points on the circle's circumference were linked to its axis. Connecting every second point around the circle's circumference generates a larger equilateral triangle while connection of the remaining three points gives another in mirror image. The two large equilaterals combine to form the Star of David (Figure 2.2d). If all six points on the circle's circumference are connected they combine to form a hexagon (Figure 2.2e), and if four of the hexagon's points are connected a rectangle is formed which is known today as a  $\sqrt{3}$  rectangle. It is most swiftly and accurately drawn by linking points in a compass-drawn daisy wheel and it can be seen that its two long sides bisect the wheel's two inherent vesicas (Figure 2.2b). A further rectangular development of the daisy wheel is drawn through all six points on the circle's circumference (Figure 2.2f). This rectangle is exactly twice the area of that drawn between four points on the circle's circumference. With the

## 2.2

Angular and spatial values of the vesica piscis and daisy wheel (numbers indicate degrees).



daisy wheel's linear and proportional potential in mind it is possible to consider its application in the design of the Monks' Door.

### The Monks' Door

The Monk's Door<sup>1</sup> is flanked by alternating cylindrical and angular columns rising to capitals, though those on the right are obscured by the later masonry of the Octagon's buttressing. From the capitals, a semi-circular tympanum arcs above the doorway. The doorway itself rises directly into the arcs of the tripartite arch, which meet at the two identical compass-drawn daisy wheels. These are cut at the ends of short horizontal drums with chevron pattern around them, like miniature parallels of the cylindrical columns in the nave of Durham Cathedral. The daisy-wheel modules are cut from the same stone as a wider decorative scheme that includes two kneeling monks holding crooks, two mythical creatures biting each other's necks, undulating trails of leafy foliage, a precise cylindrical arc of geometrical spirals and, at its apex, a small naturalistic head. All of these are divided along their vertical centre line in mirror image. An important recognition is that all four elements, the pure geometry of the daisy wheels, the anthropomorphic figures of the monks, the entwined mythological beasts and the undulating trails of vegetation, occupy the tympanum in a unified visual scheme and clearly had equal aesthetic status in the sculptor's mind.

The composition juxtaposes the human and spiritual worlds of the kneeling monks, the natural world of interwoven foliage, mythical beasts from the imagination and geometrical precision from the intellect. And it is geometrical precision from the intellect that inescapably occupies the focal points of the door's tripartite arch in the form of two daisy wheels.

Geometrical design is a step-by-step process where each stage is built logically upon the one before and, as with actual building, some of the stages act solely as scaffolding and are removed after they have served their purpose. The design commences from the full daisy-wheel construction of six circles drawn around the circumference of a central, primary circle. Two vertical tangents and a centre line are drawn (in solid line) in the daisy wheel's central vertical row of three circles, and four further horizontal lines are drawn (in dashed line) as tangents to the two pairs of horizontal circles. The seven lines form a right-angled grid that frames a block of six equal squares (Figure 2.3a). Diagonals drawn across all six squares intersect at the axes of six circles drawn to pass through the corners of the squares (Figure 2.3b). Vertical lines drawn through the intersections of the diagonals cut the top two circles at their apex so that a horizontal tangent can be drawn between them. The tangent is cut at its centre, by a vertical extension of the six squares' centre line, to give the axis of a seventh circle, which cuts the top pair of the six circles at their apex (Figure 2.3c). It also shows that two further small circles can be constructed so that their diameters are dimensioned exactly by the distance between the top pair of circles and squares. These small circles, which are the circumferences of the Monks' Door daisy wheels, can be redrawn with their axes at the intersections of the top three circles (Figure 2.3d). Finally, tangents to the six circles combine with the circumferential arcs of the top three circles to give the full profile of the Monks' Door (Figure 2.3e). Significantly, the design process both begins and ends with the daisy wheel, metamorphosing from the initial seven-circle construction, through a grammar of tangents, squares and circles, to the dramatic paired daisy wheels in the doorhead.

### Previous analyses of the nave floor

There have been a number of theories regarding the nave's layout. W. P. Griffith, writing in 1850–2, proposed a system of equilateral triangulation based on the width of the nave (including external walls) so that three triangles connected in line, apex to centre of base, gave the nave's floor.<sup>2</sup> This was correct in terms of overall proportion, but it misses the beat of the nave's internal rhythm including the aisles, arcades and the juxtaposition of cylindrical and composite piers. However, it does suggest the presence of a triple proportional unit.

Eric Fernie's analysis of the cathedral's overall dimensions established a range of proportional relationships based on the  $\sqrt{2}$  rectangle, a rectangle that extends a square by the length of its own diagonal.<sup>3</sup> The square's diagonal is in  $\sqrt{2}$  relationship to its sides so that, with a side length of one unit, the diagonal's length is 1.4142, the square root of two. Drawing a square, based on the nave width including both arcades, and developing it as a series of  $\sqrt{2}$  rectangles across either aisle, makes the square's diagonals arc onto the outer face of the aisle walls. However,

although the  $\sqrt{2}$  rectangle is clearly present, it also fails to mesh with the locations and alternation of cylindrical and composite piers in the nave arcades.

Nicola Coldstream presents a different theory. Quoting Lechler, she shows that a square, based on the internal width of the choir, can be used as a module to generate the major proportional relationships of the cathedral floor. Three individual squares define the choir and transepts while a linear block of three squares defines the nave. The choir square, north and south transept squares and the first of the three nave squares overlap each other within an identical square formed by the crossing, but leave a small rectangle, neither square nor  $\sqrt{2}$ , remaining undefined at the crossing's centre. The three great nave squares, again suggesting a triple proportional unit, nevertheless fail to define the rhythm of the cylindrical and composite piers in the arcades. However, she recognizes the important point that, 'while geometrical constructions yield irrational numbers when measured they are easy to construct and are memorable as drawings'.<sup>4</sup>

In a further theory, John Maddison presents a more practical approach. He considers that plans, drawn on vellum or on plaster walls or floors, using compasses and an L-shaped square, were replicated at large scale using simple peg-and-cord geometry. This is the first theory to introduce circle geometry at the design stage. In order to attain this, a fundamental unit of proportion was required and for this Maddison returned to Fernie's analysis of the floor which recognized a standard unit of  $5\frac{1}{2}$  feet throughout the plan. The unit doubled gives 11 feet and trebled  $16\frac{1}{2}$  feet, the medieval rod. Many of Ely's dimensions accord with this unit so that the nave's wall thickness and foundation depth are both  $5\frac{1}{2}$  feet while the maximum exterior width is 88 feet (sixteen units) and its internal width 77 feet (fourteen units), both multiples of eleven. The beauty of 11-base numbers as a mnemonic in a pre-numerate society is easy to see: 11 22 33 44 55 66 77 88 99.

Scaling up from inches to feet is also simple. A  $5\frac{1}{2}$ -inch radius circle on vellum or plaster, doubled, gives an 11-inch diameter, which can be stepped out twelve steps along a chalk line to full scale in feet. However, the book has no drawings that demonstrate the peg-and-cord theory in practice.<sup>5</sup>

Fernie produced a measured floor plan of the Norman cathedral and it is this that underpins the geometrical proposals presented in this chapter. Referring to the measured drawing and moving from west to east along the nave's aisles, the recorded consecutive bay dimensions in the north aisle are 5.47, 5.11, 5.19, 5.13, 5.22, 5.10, 5.20, 5.08, 5.05, 5.02, 5.08 and 5.05 metres and in the south aisle 5.28, 5.16, 5.18, 5.14, 5.14, 5.16, 5.19, 5.05, 5.1, 5.07, 5.04 and 5.23 metres. The nave's five recorded dimensions from west to east between the arcades are 10.08, 10.10, 10.06, 10.12 and 10.14 metres, showing that the floor narrows at the nave's centre and widens at either end, with the greatest width at the crossing. The full nave width including the aisles has four recorded dimensions, from west to east, of 23.61, 23.59, 23.57 and 23.49 metres, confirming that the nave is broader to the west and narrowest at the crossing. The north aisle has two recorded widths of 5.05 and 5.25 metres and the south aisle just one at 4.88 metres. These erratic dimensions, with an 8 per cent variation between minimum and maximum dimensions in the aisle bays, are a strong indication that the aisles and arcading were not laid out

by the methodical application of a dimensioned rule for, had they been, there would surely be far greater consistency.

In seeking a system for the nave-floor layout it is sensible to recognize first the dimensional variations outlined above, second, that in a floor as large as the Ely nave, some variation was likely whatever system was in use, and third, to focus on the spatial characteristics that remain unanswered by previous theories. With the phrase 'while geometrical constructions yield irrational numbers when measured they are easy to construct and are memorable as drawings' in mind, there are some simple spatial analyses that can be carried out, the first and most obvious being bay-rhythm alignments drawn at right angles to the nave through the centres of the arcade piers (Figure 2.4a). Cylindrical piers thus sit astride solid lines and composite piers astride dashed lines to give twelve narrow bays. These bays can be thought of in other ways, as pairs (two narrow bays) between consecutive cylindrical piers and as groups of two pairs (four narrow bays) which occur three times along the nave's length and bring to mind the triple units described above. The nave's division into three sectors generates three  $\sqrt{3}$  rectangles between the arcades' centre lines (Figure 2.4b) and hexagons across the full width of the nave (Figure 2.4c). The short sides of the rectangle are identical to two opposite sides of the hexagon. The hexagons' vertical diameters coalesce with the intermediate cylindrical piers at the  $\sqrt{3}$  rectangles' centres, thus accounting for the locations of all the nave's cylindrical piers. The hexagons are also a source of small and large equilateral triangulation. The large triangles, which are shown here, have their side length in common with the long side of the  $\sqrt{3}$  rectangle. With their base bisecting the arcade on one side of the nave and their apex reaching the wall on the other, the equilateral triangles span four narrow bays, or one-third of the nave's length and, duplicated in mirror image, form a Star of David (Figure 2.4d). The star's four horizontal stellations are identical to the  $\sqrt{3}$  rectangle's four corners and identical angles in the hexagon. Alignments drawn between the hexagons' angles at the nave's outer walls and along the nave's centre line generate three diamonds that pass through the long sides of the  $\sqrt{3}$  rectangles at the locations of the composite piers (Figure 2.4e). All of these configurations can be constructed individually within the compass geometry of a single daisy wheel, and tripled within a linear development of three interlaced wheels.

### The nave floor re-appraised

Passing beneath the Monks' Door daisy wheels into the south aisle of Ely's nave, the alternation of cylindrical and composite piers in the arcades is immediately visible. There are thirteen pairs between the western entrance arch and the crossing, comprising seven of cylindrical and six of composite form, the latter set diamond-wise to the line of the arcades. The thesis here is that, as with the Monks' Door, the nave floor and its arcades are spatial developments emanating from daisy-wheel geometry.

The daisy wheel is composed of six circles drawn around the circumference of a seventh, a *rotational* series of circles drawn along a *circular* line so that each circle passes through the axes of its neighbouring circles. Similar *linear* constructions can be drawn along *straight* lines, in which case each pair of circles will form a vesica

piscis. Single circles, drawn along a centre line and forming a series of consecutive vesicas, generate a simple, repetitive bay rhythm if the vesicas are bisected. The daisy wheel can be used in the same way, by multiplication along a centre line but, because its internal geometry is more complex, it offers greater geometrical potential. Because the wheel's internal arcs intersect at the wheel's axis and terminate at six equidistant points around its circumference it is possible to draw linkages between all seven points to generate sub-geometries. The simplest of these is to connect all six points on the circumference to form a hexagon. Connecting every second angle of the hexagon generates an equilateral triangle, while connecting the remaining angles gives a second equilateral that faces in the opposite direction. The two mirror-image equilaterals combine to form a Star of David.

It is a critical, though often unrecognized point, that rectilinear and other angular constructions arise specifically from compass geometry. For example, a linear, three daisy-wheel development (Figure 2.5a) shows that vertical lines drawn across the wheels between their petal tips and on their vertical diameters generate a repetitive bay rhythm. At right angles to this rhythm, tangents to the daisy-wheel circumferences and parallels drawn through the petal tips of all three wheels subdivide the wheels into four equal horizontal bands (Figure 2.5b). It follows that if the centre line is omitted the bands take on the ratio 1:2:1, the same aisle/nave/aisle ratio as that of the Ely floor plan. Further, if the petals on the wheel's vertical diameter are ignored, a rectangle can be drawn within each daisy wheel by connecting the four remaining petal tips. This rectangle has the harmonic proportions 1:2 between its short side and diagonal. The proportion arises because the rectangle's short side is the distance between two consecutive petal tips on the wheel's circumference while its diagonal is the distance spanned by three consecutive petal tips, the central one at the wheel's axis. Because the wheel is entirely constructed from compass-drawn arcs within a circle, all drawn at the same radius, it follows that any two consecutive petal tips anywhere within the wheel are a radius apart and any three consecutive tips in a straight line are a diameter, hence the ratio 1:2 and the rectangle's harmonic proportions. The rectangle is a  $\sqrt{3}$  rectangle, though this term would have been unknown when the Ely nave was under construction. If the rectangle is halved along its diagonal it generates two equal 30°, 60°, 90° triangles, a perfect carpenter's or mason's square.

In contrast to the rectangular developments described above, a continuous diamond sub-geometry can be constructed within the daisy wheels by linking the poles of their vertical diameters with the points on the centre line where the bay-rhythm lines intersect it (Figure 2.5c). The three linked daisy wheels, the horizontal alignments drawn through their petal tips to define the nave's bandwidth and the diamond sub-geometry combine to form a geometrical matrix that is the bedrock of the nave's floor design (Figure 2.5d). Where the daisy wheels and their diamond sub-geometries intersect the nave band-width rectangles, they meet the locations of the piers in the arcades. The design rationale is shown more clearly in the central daisy wheel where cylindrical and composite piers are emphasized in red and black respectively. The cylindrical piers have their locations on the daisy wheel's circumference and vertical diameter, while the composite piers are placed where

the diamond sub-geometry cuts the arcade alignments. The actual composite piers are also set diamond-wise in relation to the direction of the nave. It is clear that the geometrical matrix is the driving force behind the nave's design, with cylindrical piers standing on the daisy wheel's compass geometry and diagonally set composite piers standing on the diamond sub-geometry. The design process, which commences with compass-drawn daisy wheels and concludes with linear and rectilinear constructions drawn along a straight edge, is described precisely in the writing of Vitruvius, who stated that 'A ground plan is made by the proper successive use of compasses and rule, through which we get outlines for the plane surfaces of buildings'.<sup>6</sup>

### **Geometry, measurement, layout, accuracy and error**

It is essential to distinguish between geometry and measurement. Geometry is a spatial language governing the relationships of locations – the linear distances between them along either straight or curved lines – and areas. In the recording of a geometrically designed building, measurement is a translation of its spatial language into the language of numbers. This translation can lead to errors, even at the most basic level. For example, in Fernie's argument for a  $\sqrt{2}$  rectangle-based design at Ely he defines the square root of two as 1.4142. This is the generally accepted figure, but the reality is that the square root of two, like the relationship between a circle's radius and circumference, is incommensurable.

Another potential for error exists when small-scale drawings are developed into full-scale buildings and, in the reverse process, when a measured scale drawing of an existing building is made. The primary error is in the geometrical drawing itself, in the thickness of line employed. In this chapter the superimposed geometrical drawings have line thicknesses of 0.5, 0.75 and 1 mm, line weights chosen for their legibility. However, considered in relation to the Ely scale drawing, they are as coarse as ropes. Blown up to full scale the line weight would be over 125 mm for the full-scale nave, giving a 5-inch error on the ground. The original measured drawing itself may, or may not, embody some drafting errors.

Other errors are inherent in the building itself, the simplest example being in the variation of mortar joints. Some recent random joint measurements taken from piers in the nave's northern arcade range from 4 mm, in a vertical joint on a cylindrical pier (third from the crossing), to 32 mm in a horizontal joint on a composite pier (fourth from the crossing). These discrepancies, which were visible throughout the arcades, tell their own tale regarding the accuracy of the nave's construction. These small but multiple compound errors are impossible to quantify.

Fernie gives an external nave width of 88 feet but confines his analysis of proportion to the nave's internal width of 77 feet (Figure 2.6a), an approach followed in this chapter. Notably, the southern aisle is narrower than the northern aisle by a foot (300 mm) and it is relevant, therefore, to test the daisy-wheel geometry against the nave's 88-foot maximum width and to seek a reason for the difference in aisle width. A daisy wheel can be set to the nave's full 88-foot width and bandwidths determined between the wheel's circumference and the  $\sqrt{3}$  rectangle's short sides (Figure 2.6b). The bandwidths accord well with the wall alignments. Next the 88-foot wheel can be rotated through 90° and the  $\sqrt{3}$  rectangle used to project the

northern arcade alignments and aisle widths (Figure 2.6c). While these alignments accord well, the southern alignments run out of true (and are not shown here). A smaller daisy wheel, set to the nave's internal 77-feet width, gives a more accurate alignment for the southern arcade if dimensioned from the southern wall's outer face (Figure 2.6d). The 77-feet wheel is the module tripled for the layout of the nave's cylindrical and composite piers.

The difference of 11 feet between the two wheels raises the possibility that the north and south aisles were laid out to 88- and 77-feet daisy-wheel geometries respectively by different teams of masons, the northern team using 88 feet and the southern team 77 feet when laying out the arcade and wall alignments. Such an error could easily be made. With the diameter of the wheel as the sole dimension from which the whole geometrical scheme flows, it would influence every aspect of the layout and may go some way to explain why the southern arcade is not parallel to the southern wall, the faulty alignment perhaps being adjusted during construction. However, despite the deviations from parallel alignment and the individual differences in bay widths, the triple daisy-wheel geometry can be seen as the *in principle* method of laying out the spatial relationships of the nave floor.

In the transition from scaled drawing to full-scale layout on the ground, which would convert a theoretically perfect hairline geometry, drawn manually with dividers, into a large-scale stone and mortar structure, it is essential for the mind to recreate the reality of the building site and to recognize how, in the hive of activity, an error in layout could be made. Translating a drawing-board scale design to full scale means that the certainty of control that dividers can maintain through a series of arcs on parchment or plaster is lost when the process is carried out using cords. The 88-feet external and 77-feet internal span of the Ely nave could only be dimensioned by cords which, to maintain precision over those distances, would need to be verging on rope. Rope would expand or contract in changing weather, introducing further variability, and would be a dimensional entity in its own right. It should be remembered that in scaling up the geometry, the rope is not drawing circles. The daisy wheel is about triangulation and, although compass drawn, it is the six cardinal points on the wheel's circumference plus its central axis that allow straight-line triangulations to be made. With each of the cardinal points exactly a radius apart, and with three wheels joined at their petal tips, the triangulation is constant throughout the triple daisy-wheel construction.<sup>7</sup>

### **Prior Crauden's Chapel floor**

South-east of the great mass of Ely Cathedral and just a stone's throw away, Prior Crauden's Chapel is diminutive in comparison. Reached by a narrow spiral stair to first-floor level, the chapel is little more than a large room, but it houses a remarkable tile pavement, set at two levels, the sanctuary floor two steps higher than the remainder. The geometrical scheme works better here because the tiles were almost certainly designed at full scale, one third of the triple unit being just 20 inches square. A full-scale design has no transitions to make and, therefore, little chance of error.

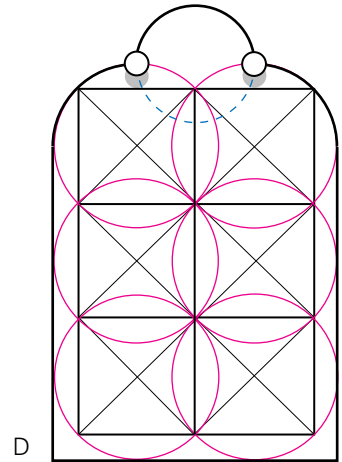
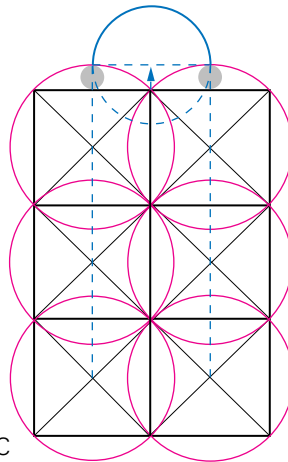
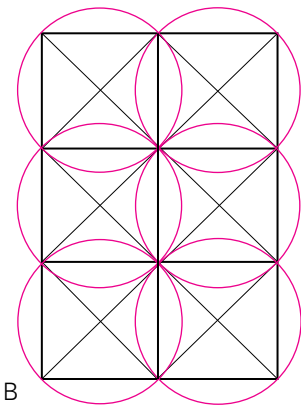
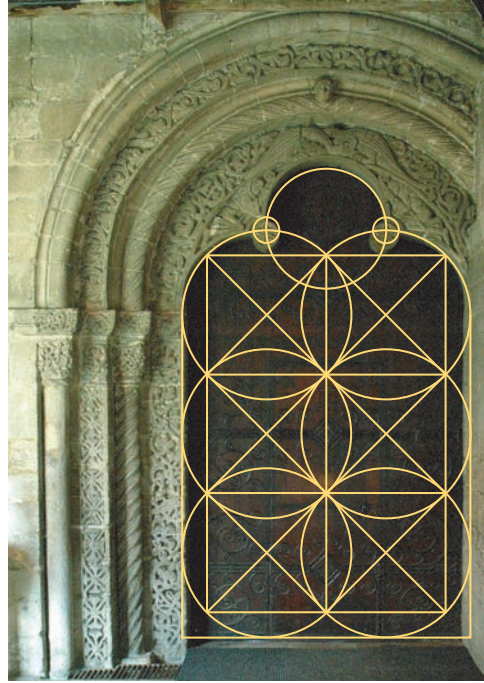
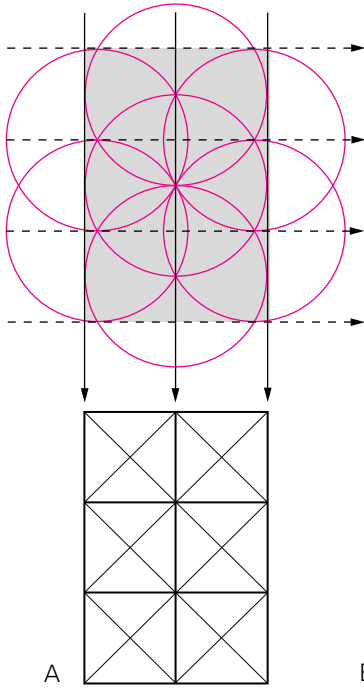
There are three visual elements to the sanctuary floor: heraldic lions at different scales, geometrical patterns at different scales and, at the centre of the



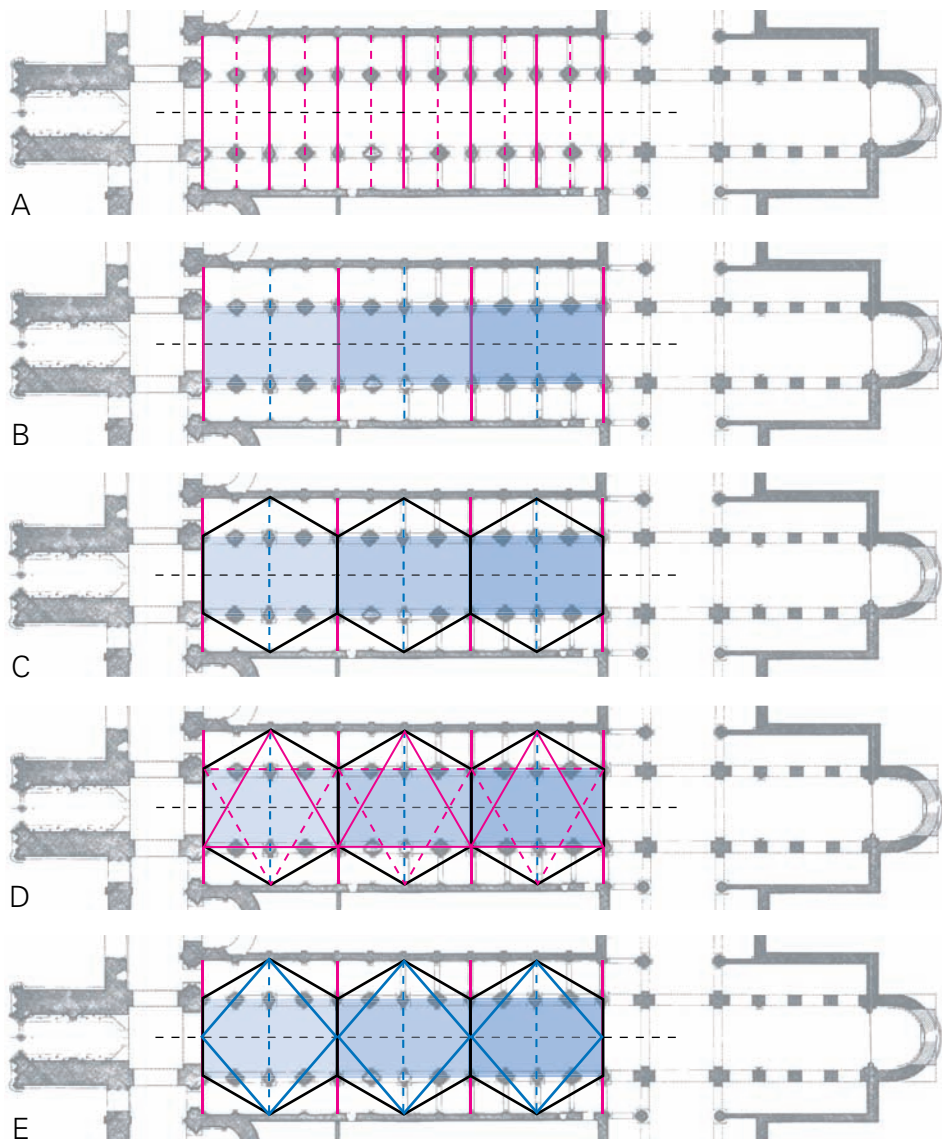
design, figurative representations of Adam, Eve and the serpent, with Eve passing Adam the fateful fruit. The figures stand with their feet at the edge of the steps; they were clearly intended to be seen from the chapel's lower level and, from this point of view, they are flanked to left and right by two rectangular strips of geometrical tiling that include solid and linear hexagons, diamonds and triangles. These are the tiles that follow the Ely nave as examples of daisy-wheel design and the triple daisy-wheel proportional module in particular, but they are defined by different and more complex sub-geometries (Figure 2.7a). The chapel's pavement dates from around 1345, about seventy years after the Cosmati pavement laid at Westminster in 1268, which also includes geometrical patterns derived from daisy-wheel geometry.<sup>8</sup>

In the first stage of the design (Figure 2.7b) pairs of equilateral triangles are drawn between the petal tips in each daisy wheel so that they overlap in mirror image to form Stars of David. Because the daisy wheels connect at their petal tips it follows that the stars also connect at their stellations to form a horizontal star bandwidth. This band is identical to the nave bandwidth in the cathedral though on a miniscule scale, just 20 inches (510mm) wide; the important recognition is that both scales have identical proportional values. It can be seen that where the stars meet, a diamond is formed between them (Figure 2.7c). A distinction must be made between these diamonds as part of the pavement's design and as actual tiles. If considered as actual tiles, the two end diamonds extend beyond the boundary of the triple daisy wheels and, in doing so, generate a slightly longer rectangle than the basic daisy-wheel geometry (compare Figures 2.7b and c). Four further diamond tiles can be placed in the remaining angles of the stars, on the right of the drawing, but these remain within the daisy-wheel bandwidth. A further sub-geometry completes the corners of the bandwidth by introducing a smaller diamond and triangles (Figure 2.7d). The smaller diamond is exactly half the height and width of the larger ones and is therefore a quarter of their area and harmonically related. It can be seen in the drawing and photograph that all the diamonds are composed of double equilateral triangles joined base to base. Once all the diamonds are placed in relation to the stars, they coalesce into the greater forms of hexagons, though each pair of great hexagons has a shared diamond in common. The great hexagons form a backdrop to the stars which, in their turn, are a backdrop for a small hexagon and a ring of six small equilateral triangles (Figure 2.7e).

Before continuing it is necessary to describe the star in terms of the two equilateral triangles that form it: that with its point at the top of the daisy wheel as an up equilateral, and that with its point at the base of the daisy wheel as a down equilateral. So, in the left-hand circle, two points of intersection occur where the up and down equilaterals intersect and two more occur at the ends of the up equilateral's base line, the positions marked by four black points. Diagonals drawn between the four points cut the down equilateral in two places and it is between these places and the up equilateral's base line that a bandwidth for the star can be established. This construction is repeated on all sides of the up equilateral, as shown in the left daisy wheel, and repeated for the down equilateral, as shown in the central wheel. The bandwidths automatically generate the star's small internal hexagon and the ring of small equilateral triangles that surround it, in the right-hand wheel. The

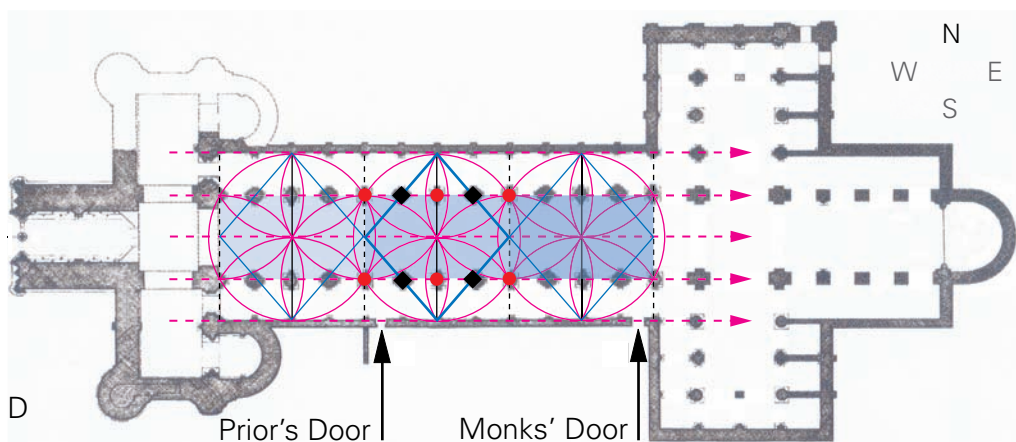
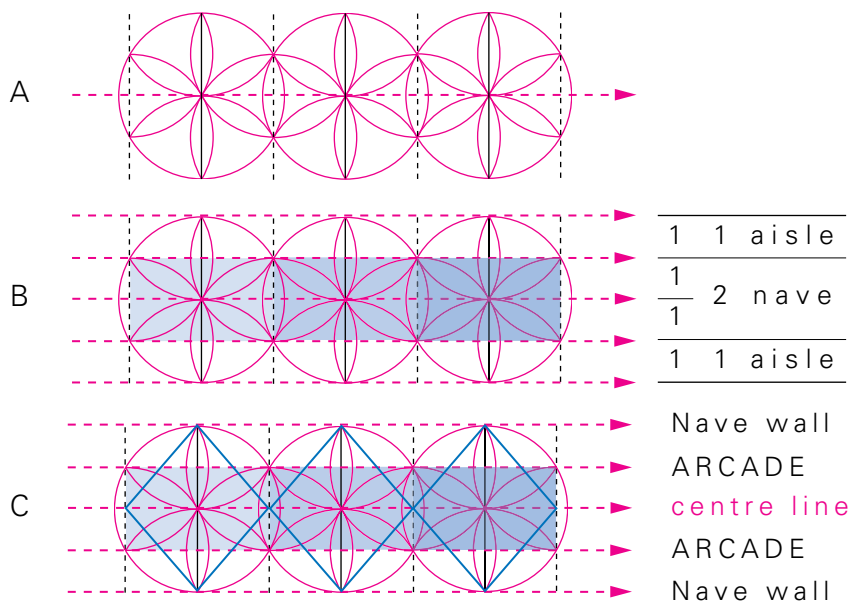


**2.3** Designing the Monks' Door. a: tangents to circles in the full seven-circle daisy wheel generate a rectangle composed of six squares. b: diagonals in the squares give centres for circles drawn through their corners. c: a seventh half circle is drawn to link the apices of the top two circles. Two small circles are drawn between the top two circle circumferences and their internal squares. d: tangents to the six interlaced circles combine with the seventh circle to form the door's boundary. The two small circles define the two daisy wheels at the junction of cusps in the tripartite arch. e: the geometry superimposed on a photograph of the door.



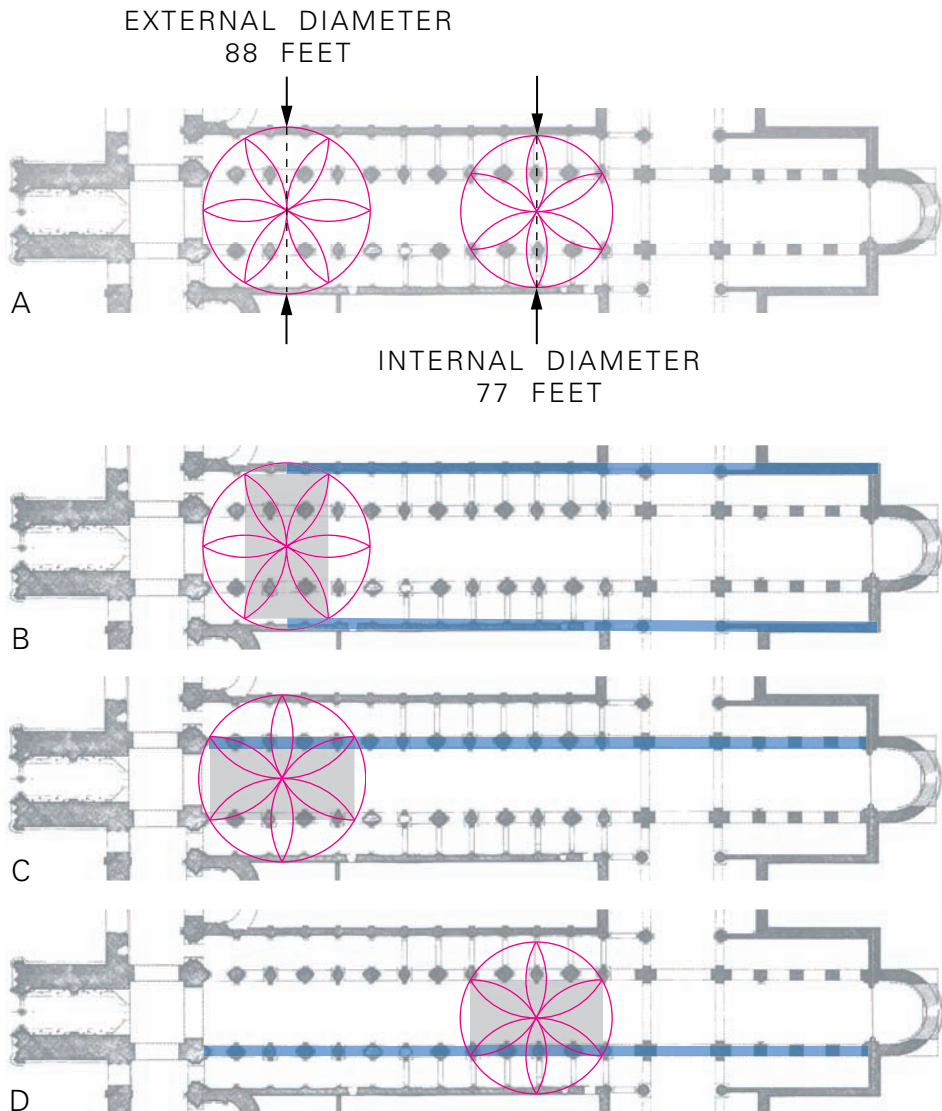
**2.4** Analysis of spatial values in the Ely nave floor. a: the simplest bay rhythm; b: proportioned thirds of the nave with  $\sqrt{3}$  rectangles between the arcades. c:  $\sqrt{3}$  rectangles form two opposite sides of hexagons within the full nave width. d: the hexagons also embody the equilateral triangulation of the Star of David. e: diamond triangulation constructed within the hexagons.

The alignments share many spatial values, strongly suggesting that they arise from a common source. The configurations have been drawn to account for the slight widening of the nave from east to west.



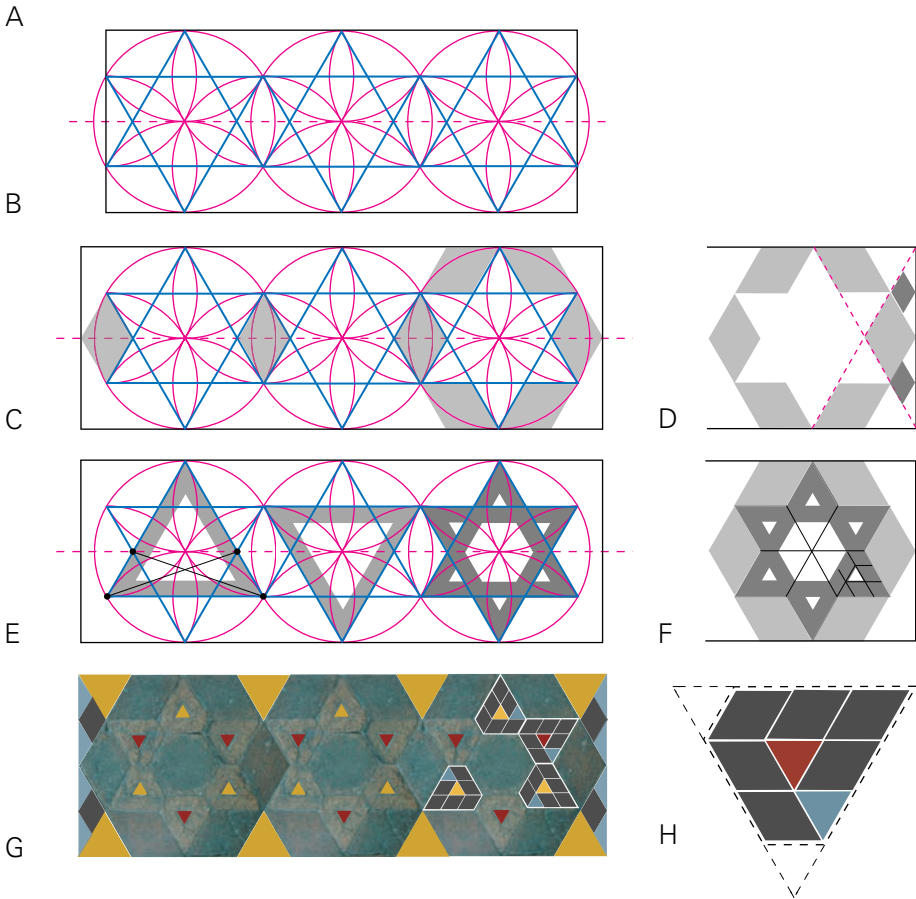
- 2.5 Designing the nave floor.** a: a sequence of three interlaced daisy wheels drawn along a centre line. b: tangents and parallels within the daisy wheels generate the 1: 2:1 proportions of the nave and aisles. The wheels also generate three  $\sqrt{3}$  rectangles. c: diamond triangulation drawn within the daisy wheels. The drawing also shows how the daisy wheel defines the nave walls' inner faces, the arcade centre lines and nave centre line. d: the drawing shows the daisy-wheel geometry superimposed upon the floor plan. The central wheel shows the arcade pier locations emphasised.

The drawing shows the development of a geometrical matrix that determines the alternating locations of cylindrical and angular piers within the nave's arcades.



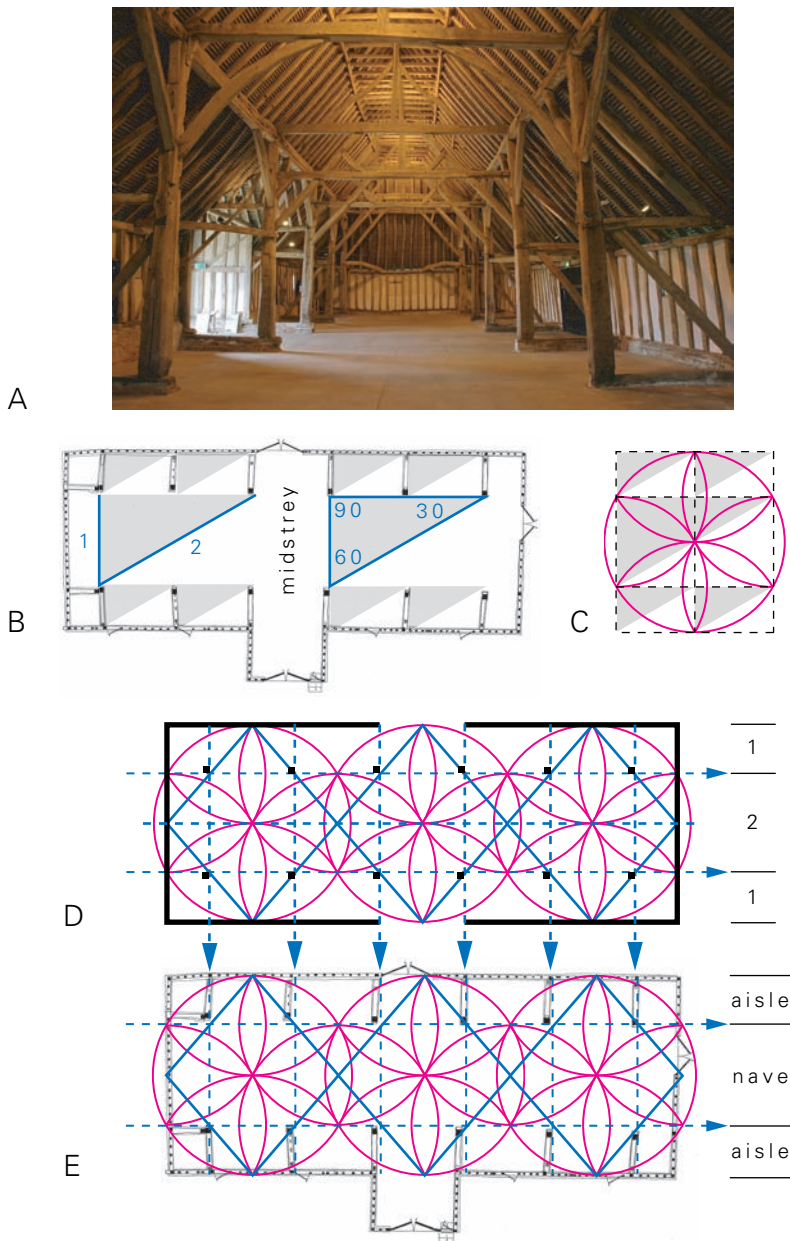
**2.6** Designing the nave wall and arcade alignments. a: the nave has an external width of 88 feet and an internal width of 77-feet, the diameters of daisy wheels used for proportioning the nave's structure. b: the 88-feet daisy wheel generates two parallel wall bandwidths between its integral  $\sqrt{3}$  rectangle and its circumference. c: the 88-feet wheel, spun through  $90^\circ$ , generates the north arcade's alignment along the upper edge of its integral  $\sqrt{3}$  rectangle. The bandwidth is identical to the wall bandwidths. d: the south arcade is closer to the aisle wall than the north arcade. The drawing shows that the south arcade was set out to the smaller, internal 77-feet daisy wheel, which explains the difference in width between the two aisles.



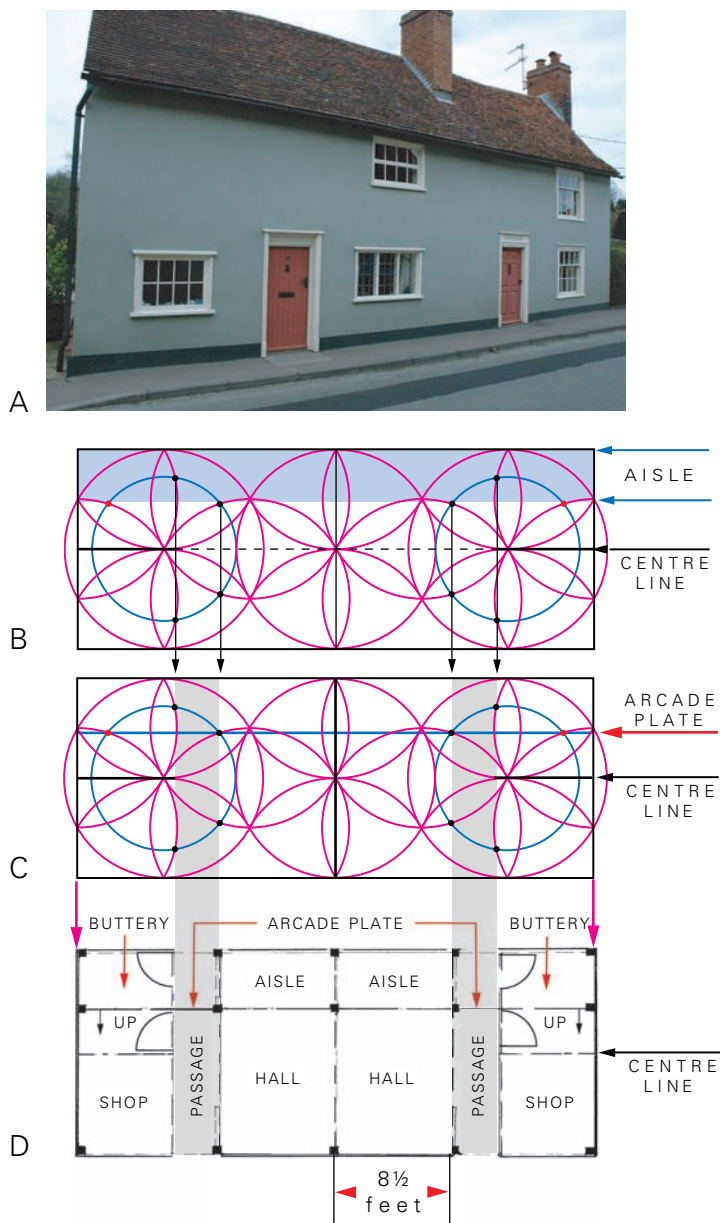


**2.7** Designing Prior Crauden's Chapel pavement panel. a: a triple tile panel beneath the altar table. b-f: developing stars of David and diamonds from the daisy wheels. g: a photographic and drawn reconstruction of the tile panel showing the intricacy of the pattern down to the smallest detail. h: detail of the truncated equilateral triangles that form the star within each great hexagon. The pattern is entirely composed of equilateral triangles, truncated equilaterals and diamonds.

The drawings show the triple daisy-wheel module's development into a complex but harmonically unified pattern within a group of tiles.

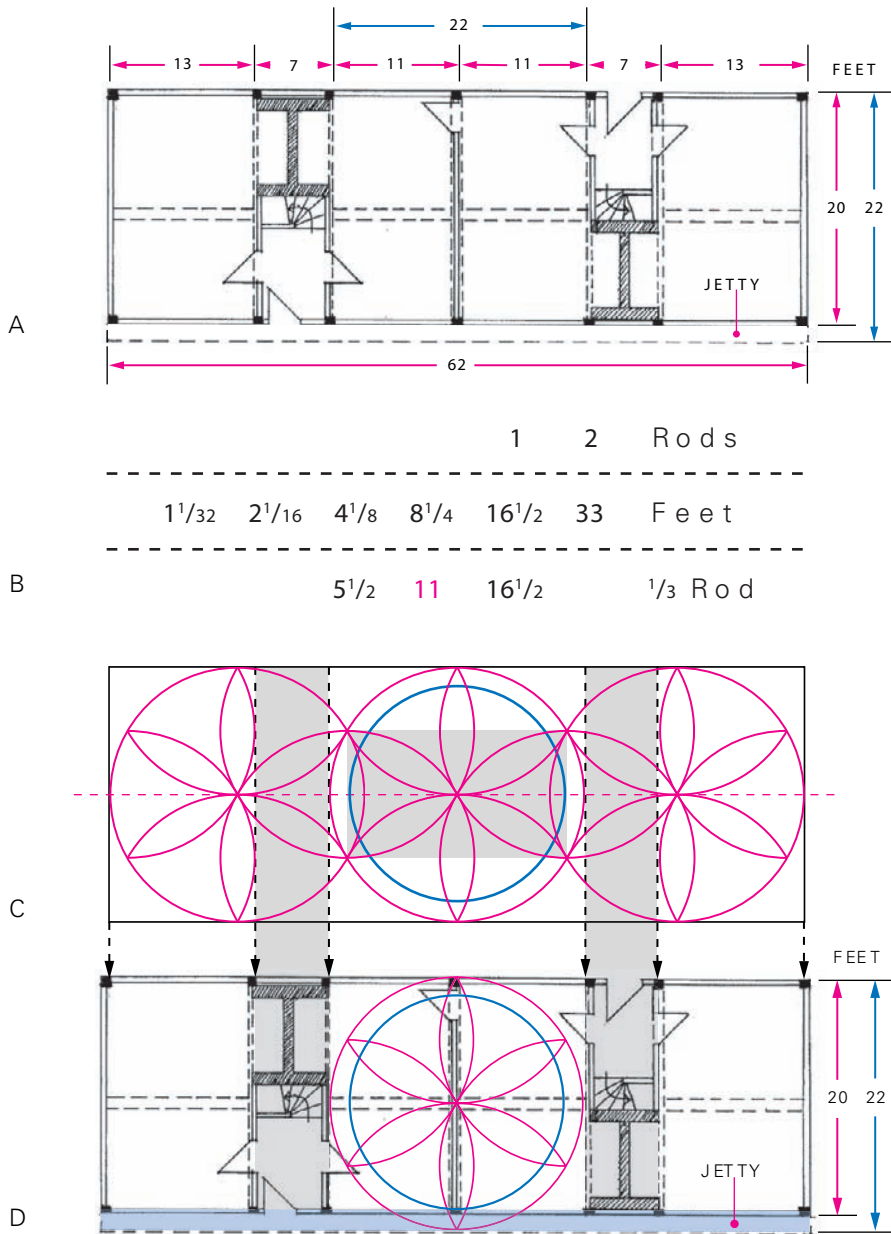


**2.8** Designing the Barley Barn floor: a: the barn's interior; b: the measured floor plan showing the 1:2 ratios discovered by Adrian Gibson and the presence of  $30^\circ$ ,  $60^\circ$ ,  $90^\circ$  triangulation; c: the author's proof that the 1:2 ratios had their origin in the daisy wheel; d: the geometrical floor plan with aisle posts placed in the same positions as Ely Cathedral nave's composite piers; e: the geometrical floor plan superimposed on the measured drawing. The daisy-wheel diameter and width of the barn is three medieval rods or 49 feet 6 inches (a rod is  $16\frac{1}{2}$  feet).



**2.9** Designing the Nayland mirror-imaged halls. a: 17 Court Street, Nayland. b: the geometrical floor plan showing secondary circles (in blue) drawn to touch the overlapped vertical vesicas. The blue circle cuts the daisy wheel's arcs at cardinal intersections that define the rear aisle and cross passages. c: the alignments of the cross passages and arcade plate. d: the floor plan showing the mirror-image layout of the two hall houses, with the geometrical passages in drawing c extended into the floor plan. The halls are diminutive, just 8 feet 6 inches wide.





**2.10** Designing the mirror-imaged Jamestown Governor's House. a: the footprint and dimensions, showing the two central rooms of 11-feet width and the jetty along the building's façade. b: a table of medieval rod dimensions, their fractional equivalents in feet and the 11-feet dimension equal to  $\frac{2}{3}$  rod. c: triple daisy-wheel proportions with passages defined between the wheels' vertical vesicas and projected down into drawing d. In the central wheel, a  $\sqrt{3}$  rectangle's length determines the diameter of a smaller (blue) circle. d: the blue circle defines the ground-floor sill alignment while the full daisy wheel defines the first-floor jetty.

hexagon's sides are 4 inches (102 mm) in length. In the final stage of the development (Figure 2.7f) radials from the axis of the hexagon cut the star's bandwidth to produce six truncated equilateral triangles, the shapes of the actual tiles. However, there is one more stage in the pattern's development, almost certainly carried out as the tiles were manufactured. The star's bottom-right stellation shows a further set of divisions, drawn as parallels to the central triangle, that give three small diamonds on one side, two on the second and one and a half on the third. These lines are knife-cut into the tile's surface. The harmonic geometrical intricacy of the full tile scheme (Figure 2.7g) is maintained down to the finest detail (Figure 2.7h).

### The Barley Barn floor and section

The Barley Barn at Cressing Temple (Figure 2.8a) was built by the Knights Templar in 1220, the first of two great aisled barns constructed at their Essex estate. The barn has seven bays, five of which are of equal width, with narrower bays concluding the barn at either end. The great waggon porch into the midstrey is later and not part of this analysis. The midstrey, which is central to the five equal bays, has a pair of bays at either side, each pair forming a nave rectangle bounded by three pairs of massive arcade posts. These nave floor rectangles were shown by Adrian Gibson to have the harmonic ratio 1:2 between their short side (across the barn) and their diagonal (from the first arcade post on one side of the nave to the third on the opposite side).<sup>9</sup> He found the same ratios in the aisles but these were within single bays and were half the length and width of the nave ratios (Figure 2.8b). The nave and aisle ratios, which are identical proportionally but of different scale, have their genesis in compass geometry. A rectangle drawn through all six of the daisy wheel's petal tips (Figure 2.8c) can be halved vertically by connecting the tips on the wheel's vertical axis and divided into three horizontal bands by connecting the remaining four. The bands, in the ratios 1:2:1 across the barn's width, generate one large central rectangle with two small rectangles at either side. Drawing diagonals across each of the rectangles generates identical proportional triangulation to that of the barn's floor. The triangulation gives perfect set-square angles of 30°, 60° and 90° (Figure 2.8b). It is noticeable that, as in the Ely nave geometry, the nave begins and ends at two petal tips rather than at the circumference of the daisy wheel's circle. This is a practical use of the geometry because it is easier and more accurate to plot a bay rhythm between two fixed points than as a tangent to a circle. This is also why the three daisy wheels connect at their petal tips.

The floor plan, although smaller in area than the Ely nave, has identical proportions and can be generated from the same triple daisy-wheel geometry. Once the three daisy wheels are constructed, arcade alignments can be drawn through their horizontal petal tips, along the barn's length (Figure 2.8d). The construction of a diamond grid cuts the arcade alignments at twelve points of intersection, six along each side of the barn, and lines drawn through these points across the barn's width generate the building's bay rhythm of five equal bays with narrower bays at either end. The arcade posts are placed at the intersection of the arcade alignments and bay-rhythm lines and it is noticeable that they are all placed to the same side of the bay-rhythm lines (on the left in the drawing). It is conventional carpentry practice

for bay frames to be placed adjacent to the geometrical lines that define them, but it can cause difficulties in measured analysis. This is because, when measured, the two end bays are unequal, the reason being that there is an arcade post in one geometrical bay but not in the other. At Cressing, it was thought for some time that this discrepancy resulted from the narrower end bay's gable wall having been rebuilt closer to the nearest arcade posts or even that both end bays had been reconstructed to a narrower bay width than the other bays along the barn's length. This demonstrates that measurements, however accurately taken, can give erroneous information. Geometrical analysis, conversely, gives spatial information and, in the case of the barn, a more accurate picture, because it provides a reason for the different narrow bay widths. But, because the barn's designer was a carpenter, understanding carpentry layout and framing methods adds further, essential practical insights (Figure 2.8e).

Comparing the Ely nave and Barley Barn geometrical floors, the significant difference is that all fourteen of the Ely cylindrical pier locations, including the semi-piers at each end of the nave, are absent in the layout of the barn. There are sound reasons for this. The cathedral is far greater in scale and built from stone. The great weight of the cathedral's masonry, constructed on ground, triforium and clerestorey levels, clearly needs greater physical support than the structure of the barn, which is essentially a timber space frame pegged together at cardinal points in its structure.

## **17 Court Street, Nayland, Suffolk**

The village of Nayland, which is in the richly timber-framed area that spreads along both sides of the Essex–Suffolk border, is home to four unusual buildings. These pairs of rentable properties of the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century can be found in Bear Street, Birch Street, Fen Street and Court Street.<sup>10</sup> The façade of 17 Court Street (Figure 2.9a) is deceptive for, although the two medieval renters are now combined into a single house, each of the originals were just 18 feet long, with each frontage housing a hall, cross passage and service area, the front of which was possibly a shop. The two diminutive smoke-blackened halls, a mere 8½ feet in length, were augmented by an aisle across the rear of the building. Over time, the original long walls were raised to incorporate a first floor and the rear aisle metamorphosed into a catslide extension. The true scale of the building can be gauged by standing beside the front doors. The left doorhead drip is the height of a six-foot man, while the right doorhead reaches only to the shoulder. Both doors still open into cross passages. Importantly, from a design-research perspective, there is a measured floor plan of the mirrored hall houses that make up 17 Court Street.<sup>11</sup>

Like modern semi-detached houses, each pair is constructed in mirror image either side of a central party wall, yet the geometrical foundation upon which they stand is a linear, triple daisy-wheel configuration identical to that of the Ely nave, Prior Crauden's Chapel tiles and the Barley Barn at Cressing. However, the sub-geometry is quite different, simpler and, unlike the angular sub-geometries of the previous examples, employs compass-drawn circles to generate new cardinal points of intersection in the daisy-wheel alignment. If two small circles (Figure 2.9b),

shown in blue, are drawn within the outer daisy wheels so that they touch the circumference of the central wheel, each small circle cuts its daisy wheel's petals at four cardinal points, marked by black dots, that are crucial to the design. Alignments drawn through the marked points, at right angles to the three daisy wheels, establish bandwidths that define the cross passages of each semi-detached house. Two black points and two further cardinal points, shown in red, mark the alignment of the aisle running across the rear of both houses, shown in blue tone. The daisy wheels' centre line marks the dividing walls between the front and rear of the houses. The passages are shown in tone (Figure 2.9c) and transmitted down into the floor plan (Figure 2.9d). It can be seen that the floor rectangle of the building is defined on the long walls by tangents to the three daisy wheels and, at the short end walls, by an alignment through two of the daisy wheel's petal tips, a construction that automatically generates right angles at the building's four corners (Figures 2.9c and d).

There is an interesting lesson in the geometry of the arcade plate's alignment where it passes through points on the daisy-wheel petals. It can be seen (Figure 2.9c) that this alignment passes very close to, but not through, the daisy-wheel petal tips at the wheels' circumference. In daisy-wheel geometry generally, the petal tips would have been the expected positions for an alignment, so the chosen alignment reveals the carpenter's thought-process. The design proceeds a step at a time, alternating between linear and compass drawing. It commences with a straight centre line on which the compass daisy wheels are drawn. The daisy wheels, in turn, define the building's angular perimeter. A compass sub-geometry is then drawn and from this the angular cross passages and linear arcade plate can be drawn. So the design follows the path from linear to compass to rectangle to compass to linear in a carefully orchestrated relationship between circularity and angularity. Without the underlying geometrical grid, which imparts a proportional harmony to the building's floor plan, it is difficult to comprehend why the particular configuration of external and internal walls would be in the positions that they are.

### **The Governor's House, Jamestown, Virginia**

It is a quirk of history that the Governor's House, built at Jamestown, Virginia, in 1610 and the most recent of the examples in this chapter, is the only one not to have survived to the present day as a standing building. Conversely, where the designers and builders of the other examples are now lost, the names of the four Jamestown carpenters who cut and assembled the frame of the Governor's House are known: William Laxton (or Laxon), John Laydon, Edward Posing (or Pising) and Robert Small who all came from the Suffolk area of England. There is also a brief description, 'Jamestown . . . two rows of fair cottages, 2 storey with corn loft'.<sup>12</sup> However, what does survive is the recently discovered footprint of the house, recovered by archaeologists from the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (Figure 2.10a).<sup>13</sup> The Governor's House footprint indicates a building mirrored to either side of a central party wall as well as from front to back, with the entrances to the two sectors on opposite sides of the building, a symmetry also applied to the chimneys. Significantly, the two rooms either side of the central party wall were 11-feet wide, two-thirds of the medieval rod (16½ feet) (Figure 2.10b). Dimensions

developed from an 11 base are common in the medieval period, as has been seen in Ely Cathedral. Ludlow burgage plots are 33 feet, or a double rod, in width. Adding the widths of the two central rooms gave a dimension of 22 feet, a measurement with obvious 11-base resonance. Developing a triple daisy-wheel grid scaled to 11-foot radius (22-feet diameter) and projecting it onto the footprint (Figures 2.10c and d) gives the building's length to the inner face of the end-wall sill beams and generates precise alignments for the mirrored entrance passages and chimneys, determined by tangents to the vertical vesicas in the two outer daisy wheels.

However, although this compass geometry was 2-feet wider than the footprint at ground level, it was clear that the building could have been designed to be 22-feet wide at wall-plate level and diminished geometrically to 20 feet at floor level to give the footprint, a jetty at first-floor level accounting for the dimensional difference. There is an interesting parallel to this in the reconstruction of the Globe Theatre in London, built first in 1599, damaged by fire in 1613 and rebuilt in 1614, just four years after the Governor's House. Jon Greenfield has written,

studies tended to concentrate analysis exclusively on the lower members of the timber frame, the sill beams. Peter Streete, the Globe's master carpenter would have been thinking beyond this at the outset. His first task . . . would have been to set out sill beam and wall plate together, the sill being the lowest component of the structural frame and wall plate being the highest. So Peter Streete had in his mind not just one set of dimensions (for setting out the sill) but a second set for the wall plate too, both of equal importance. The possible presence of jetties at the storey heights . . . means that the setting out of the wall plate and the setting out of the sill could be quite different.<sup>14</sup>

A rectangle connecting four of the central daisy wheel's petal tips can be used to dimension a smaller circle within the wheel, shown in blue (Figure 2.10c). It is this circle that defines the narrower building width at ground level while the full daisy wheel oversails it to establish the jetty. The distance from the back wall to the front circumference of the small circle at ground level is 20 feet, identical to the footprint (Figure 2.10d). The Jamestown footprint differs from the previous examples in one respect, that the building's length extends beyond the outer daisy wheel's petal tips as far as the circles' circumferences. This means, in proportional terms, that the Governor's House is slightly longer in relation to its maximum width at wall-plate level than the other examples. This would have been a choice on the part of the carpenters, easily attained by taking a centre-line measurement from both the end daisy wheels, from axis to circumference, and repeating it on the front and rear wall alignments.

### **Daisy-wheel design in a broader context**

A design system spanning four hundred years, from Ely to Jamestown, might seem improbable in our world of constant change. Without the momentum of mechanization, automation and electronics, a world where progress was attained through

manual labour and transport by horse, ox or water saw slower evolution and the maintenance of viable design and construction procedures over long periods of time.

The rectilinear proportional designs outlined above are, in fact, a small sample of daisy-wheel design, grouped together because they provide evidence for the employment of a specific design strategy. The rationale is simple, that the daisy wheel's intrinsic triangulation and the design potential embodied within it, can be extended by repetition any number of times along a centre line. The daisy wheels in an extended sequence are connected at their petal tips precisely because the tips are also focal points in each wheel's internal triangulation. The linkage therefore extends the triangulation over a greater distance. The crucial decisions are the number of wheels to be connected and the orientation of the wheels within the extended bandwidth. All five examples in this chapter have the same orientation, with two of the wheel's petals occupying positions on the vertical diameter either side of the axis, and extended through three wheels. As is clear from the drawings, this triple sequence generates the proportions of a specific long rectangle, suited to the functions of a cathedral nave, a barn with a central midstrete, or mirrored, semi-detached houses with double passages and entrances.

Although the focus here is on these examples it is worth mentioning in passing that other proportional rectangles can be derived from daisy-wheel sequences, and that these may be on a different orientation. In north Wales, the Landmark Trust property Dolbelydr (Welsh *dol* = meadow, *pelydr* = radiant) is designed on a three-daisy-wheel sequence with the wheels' diameters oriented horizontally. This gives a greater degree of overlap between the wheels which, in turn, compresses the length of the rectangle, making the building shorter in relation to its width than the examples above. However, this is compensated for by the fact that Dolbelydr is an early storeyed house, so the shortened proportions are duplicated one above the other on the ground and first floors to give a substantial floor area in total. Dolbelydr has been dendrochronologically dated to 1578.<sup>15</sup> Conversely, Leigh Court Barn, near Worcester, maintains the same orientation as the examples given above, but extends on plan to a five-wheel sequence with the wheel's radius of 16½ feet giving a 33-feet diameter, the barn's width of two medieval rods. Each of the five daisy wheels is divided into two sectors by its vertical diameter, each sector being one bay of the barn, the five wheels therefore generating ten bays in total. A ten-bay frame has eleven trusses: two end walls and nine bay trusses, all nine of which, at Leigh Court, are framed as cruck pairs. Leigh Court Barn was built for the monks of Pershore Abbey in 1344. Both of these variants, therefore, fall within the same time scale as the examples described here. What emerges overall is a geometrical methodology for setting out daisy-wheel-based triangulation on the ground in order to establish proportionally controlled floor plans of varying lengths, an essential prerequisite, once the section has been designed, to calculating the volume of stone or timber needed for the construction of each building.

However, daisy-wheel geometry can be found in England almost a thousand years earlier than the Ely nave, carved on Roman military tombstones. Gaius Saufeius, a soldier in the IX Hispana at Lincoln, was commemorated by a tombstone decorated with three precisely carved individual daisy wheels above the inscription

recording his life. The stone's form and inscription can be designed using a single daisy wheel. On the opposite side of the country at Chester the tomb of Aelius Claudianus features a band of five overlapped daisy wheels, all of identical radius with each passing through the axis of its neighbours. A rectangle drawn around the wheels gives the overall proportions of the whole stone. The five wheels are therefore both a decorative band across the head of the stone and, simultaneously, the reason for its external proportions.<sup>16</sup> At Fishbourne Palace, near Chichester in Sussex, the daisy wheel is one of a number of geometrical configurations that appear in the mosaic floors, used there as a construction grid for pattern making. At Ebbsfleet, near Gravesend in Kent, archaeologists recently discovered the remains of an Anglo-Saxon water mill from 700 AD which had a full seven-circle daisy wheel finely scribed into the upper boarding of one of two large timber chutes that focused the water's force onto the mill wheel.<sup>17</sup> The geometry of the daisy wheel allows for the construction of either six or twelve radials from the primary circle's axis, all at either 30° or 60° intervals and exactly the configuration required for the paddle arms of a water wheel. Although the actual wheel was missing at Ebbsfleet, a similar mill discovered at Tamworth retained its twelve-paddled water wheel. The Ebbsfleet mill is the earliest known horizontal water mill so far found in England.

From much more recent times there is an unusual example of daisy-wheel building design in the form of Shackleton's Nimrod Hut, constructed by Humphreys Limited of Knightsbridge to Shackleton's own design for the British Antarctic Expedition of 1906.<sup>18</sup> Shackleton's floor dimensions (33 × 19 feet) give a diagonal of 38 feet so that the short side to diagonal ratio of 19:38 (or 1:2) gives the harmonic proportional ratio found by connecting four of the daisy wheel's six petal tips. The three-dimensional form of the hut also follows daisy-wheel design principles in every respect, and 33 feet is, of course, the medieval double rod. Shackleton's Nimrod Hut is, like Jamestown's early buildings, an English design built on another continent.

By far the greatest evidence of daisy wheels can be found scribed, predominantly by dividers and occasionally by compass race knife, in the surfaces of timber-framed buildings. Although regrettably few records have been kept of their locations, scribed wheels are found in numbers in all parts of the country. They are so commonly found on timber frames that a building without them is the exception rather than the rule.<sup>19</sup> These non-assembly marks can be orthodox daisy wheels, seven-circle constructions with a central daisy wheel, or other types of compass configurations, including a small number of non-daisy-wheel compass configurations, which also yield rectangular or square constructions, and incomplete daisy wheels referred to by modern frame carpenters as cut circles. Cut circles usually show the primary circle cut by six small arcs at equal distances around the circumference, the six points which, in conjunction with the wheel's axis, allow the construction of equilateral triangulation. Some cut circles have only three cuts on the primary circle which, when connected, allow angles including a right angle to be constructed. Others have four cuts and these provide the connections necessary for the 1:2 ratio rectangle.

## Pre-numerate, pre-industrial design

There is a school of thought that all daisy-wheel and related geometrical symbols have some ritual purpose. This may or may not be the case. The argument here focuses solely on the design capacity of daisy-wheel and cut-circle geometries found scribed into, predominantly, timber-framed buildings. The question arises, why should these marks be so prevalent in timber frames? While the design function of the daisy wheel has already been demonstrated, the answer to this question becomes clearer if the character of the marks is examined in detail. All marks scribed with dividers (which are needle sharp) are extremely fine and often invisible unless a strong light is shone obliquely across the surface of the timber so that shadows are cast from the edges of the mark. Dividers are carpenters' tools and are used to measure and transmit the depths, dimensions and positions of joints to be cut from one timber to another. These positions, in turn, are often extended across timbers with a scratch awl along a straight edge or square, marks often seen, for example, as vertical lines at either side of joists where they are jointed into a ceiling beam, the lines marking the width of the mortices. The lines are usually scribed right across the beam and it is the sector undisturbed by cutting the mortice that remains to be seen after the joints are assembled. A second and heavier type of line is scribed using a compass race knife, a small, fixed radius tool with a compass pin on one arm and a miniature gouge on the other. The tool also has a small retractable arm for drag gouging straight lines. In contrast to the delicacy of scribed divider lines, the race knife cuts a line of approximately a sixteenth of an inch in width which is clearly visible as a small half-round channel. This is because the race knife is used to code the timbers of individual trusses, long walls and roof planes within the overall frame, after they have been assessed for correct fit in a test assembly. The test assemblies can then be dismantled, transported to site, and re-assembled by reference to the marks. To serve this purpose, the marks scribed with the race knife must be clearly visible and, because it is a fixed radius tool, it follows that the marks produced with it are circles and half circles or, in large buildings, multiples.

At Lower Brockhampton in Herefordshire, for example, the two-storey jettied gatehouse that also acts as a bridge across the manor house moat has half-circle race-knife marks on one doorpost and full-circle vesica marks on the other, clearly distinguishing the opposite sides of the frame. Individual timbers within the frame are numbered using the retractable arm to drag linear gouge marks approximate to Roman numerals. That these timbers are all identified by race-knife compass arcs, linear drag cuts, scratch-awl lines indicating locations of joints and, further, are drilled to receive pegs that will hold the erected frame together, are all indicators of, in modern phraseology, a kit-form or prefabricated building. Such a building must be planned in order to establish what comprises the kit and where each component is to be located. In fact, the planning goes back further for it is essential to make a cutting list before entering the woodland for felling and it is impossible to compile a cutting list without a plan. All the marks found on timber frames speak loudly of the work of carpenters – craftsmen who used dividers and race knives in their daily work. This repertoire of marks can be viewed as a historic, nationwide archive that bears witness to a highly organized design-and-build methodology. The argument here is



that, in a pre-industrial, pre-numerate society where manual skills were widespread, geometry was the state-of-the-art design system. It needed only dividers, straight edge (or square) and scribe, tools that were simple to use and widely available. The method was free from mathematical calculation because all design evolved from an initial radius chosen to fit the scale of the job in hand.

The evidence of daisy wheels and related geometrical symbols, divider-scribed and race-knife-cut into timber frames, or chisel-cut into masonry buildings, is inescapable. The former are found throughout the country in the widest range of buildings including houses and barns of humble status, while the latter tend to be found in high-status masonry buildings. The five examples presented here span a wide spectrum of status, from Ely Cathedral down to the small Nayland hall houses, and of scale, from Ely's 200 × 77 feet nave to the 5 × 1½ feet tile panels in Prior Crauden's Chapel. While the daisy wheel's precision presence at Ely both suggests and provides the geometrical start point for proportional analysis, its absence from other buildings does not preclude the likelihood that it was used. The reverse is true. If a building's proportions on plan accurately fit a specific geometry, that geometry is the most credible reason for the building's proportions.

In conclusion, the examples of daisy-wheel geometrical design described above can be seen as a specific design application for the proportional layout of linear buildings or, in the case of the Ely nave, a linear component within a cruciform architectural scheme. To be absolutely clear, the geometrical design is the blueprint for laying out each of the ground plans of the buildings in question, irrespective of their scale and, while the configurations shown in this chapter can be reached by other geometrical routes, the triple daisy-wheel module is the simplest means of reaching the blueprint. It has the advantage that it can be drawn to a single radius, thus eliminating the need for mathematical calculation, and chosen to fit the specific building in question. At Ely, the likelihood of its use is endorsed by the powerful presence of the daisy wheels carved into the cathedral's fabric. The fact that, even in this small sample, the geometrical blueprint is found in buildings across such a wide social spectrum suggests the existence of a design methodology that was common knowledge among carpenters and masons at all levels of society; that this knowledge was widespread; and that it was applied to even the simplest of buildings. And, if this is the case, it challenges our current understanding of the term vernacular.

### **Postscript: a frame for Cecil and Adrian**

After the presentation of this research at the SAHGB/VAG symposium in May 2008 an opportunity arose to submit the viability of the proportional design systems outlined above to a practical test. I was asked to design a small, single-bay gardener's shelter for the Elizabethan walled garden at Cressing Temple in Essex using geometrical principles. I decided to use the same base-line daisy-wheel geometry that underpins the floor plan of the Barley Barn. The project was run by the Carpenters' Fellowship with timber supplied from local woodland by Essex County Council. With my colleagues, William Clement Smith from Suffolk and Joel Hendry from Dartmoor, project manager and lead carpenter respectively, I ran an eight-day timber-framing course commencing from timber in the round. There were no petrol or electrically

driven power tools on site, and no measurements or modern-dimensioned rulers or tapes were used. Conversion was undertaken with hand-held axes and trestle saws. Using two rods of 7½ feet radius we set out a daisy-wheel triangulation on the ground with the geometry then plumbed up to the timber layouts. Twenty carpenters from Canada, the USA, Europe and the UK, ranging from novices to established professionals, cut and raised the frame in eight days. The geometrical design method ran smoothly from start to finish, proving that a building can be designed to geometrical proportions from a radius alone, without the need for conventional dimensions or mathematical calculations. A commemorative inscription to Cecil Hewett and Adrian Gibson, who both had a long association with Cressing Temple, was chisel-cut into the frame by Rupert Newman of Westwind Oak Buildings, Bristol, the wording reading simply: 'A Frame for Cecil and Adrian'.

## Notes

- 1 John Maddison cites George Zarnecki in dating the Monks' Door to 1135. The foliage replicates that found in an illuminated manuscript produced in the Ely scriptorium at that date. See, John Maddison, *Ely Cathedral, Design and Meaning* (Ely, 2000), p. 31.
- 2 W. P. Griffith, in Joseph Gwilt, *The Encyclopaedia of Architecture* (London 1867), revised by Wyatt Papworth (New York, 1982), p. 974
- 3 Eric Fernie, 'Observations on the Norman Plan of Ely Cathedral', in *British Archaeological Association Conference Transactions for the year 1976 II: Medieval Art and Architecture at Ely Cathedral*, eds Nicola Coldstream and Peter Draper, 1979, pp. 1–7.
- 4 Nicola Coldstream, *Medieval Craftsmen: Masons and Sculptors* (London, 1991), p. 37.
- 5 Maddison, *Ely*, pp. 15–16.
- 6 Vitruvius, *The Ten Books on Architecture*, translated by Morris Hickey Morgan (New York, 1960), pp. 13–14.
- 7 Triangulation can be developed as layout on the ground by peg and cord or by stepping out along lines. Stepping out is usually developed along a chalk line, either on the ground, on masonry or along timbers.
- 8 For the floor of Prior Crauden's Chapel see eds Coldstream and Draper, *BAA*, plate XX. For the Cosmati pavement in Westminster Abbey see Richard Foster, *Patterns of Thought* (London, 1991), p. 14.
- 9 Adrian Gibson, 'The Constructive Geometry in the Design of the Thirteenth-Century Barns at Cressing Temple', *Essex Archaeology and History*, 25 (1994), pp. 107–12.
- 10 These Nayland houses were brought to my attention by Suffolk carpenter Rick Lewis and are described in Leigh Alston *et al.*, *A Walk Around Historic Nayland* (Nayland, 2000).
- 11 The plan of 17 Court Street was sent to me by Adrian Gibson.
- 12 This quote was passed to me by the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities.
- 13 The footprint was brought to my notice by Norman Guiver, Chairman of the UK Carpenters' Fellowship, who asked me to look for evidence of any geometrical proportions as the Carpenters' Fellowship and their American counterpart, the Timber Framers' Guild, were planning a joint reconstruction of the building using English carpentry techniques. Philip Aitkens drew a perspective reconstruction of the house based on its footprint and houses of the same date and type in Suffolk. Being a storeyed house, his representation was jettied at first-floor level on the front elevation.
- 14 Jon Greenfield, 'Timber Framing', in eds J. R. Mulryne and Margaret Shewring, *Shakespeare's Globe Rebuilt* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 97–100.
- 15 For this date I am grateful to Andrew Thomas, the architect for repairs at Dolbelydr carried out by the Landmark Trust.

**L. Smith**

- 16 Gaius Saufeius' and Aelius Claudianus' stones can be found in the British Museum and Chester's Grosvenor Museum respectively. The British Museum also has examples of Roman dividers and squares.
- 17 I am grateful to Damian Goodburn for information about the Ebbsfleet archaeology.
- 18 Gordon Macdonald, 'Extreme Conservation: Saving Shackleton's Hut' and 'Conservation of Shackleton's Hut', *Mortice and Tenon*, 22 (Winter, 2005), p. 11 and 24 (Summer, 2006), pp. 2–5.
- 19 Peter Smith, the author of *Houses of the Welsh Countryside: A Study in Historical Geography* (London, 1975), has told me that he has seen thousands, many of them in buildings of humble status.

## Chapter 3

# Pre-Reformation Parish Churches

## A Point of View

*P. S. Barnwell*

There is, to start with a statement of the obvious, more than one way of seeking to understand parish churches or parochial chapels, the places in which members of a typical local community in England worshipped before the Reformation, and no single avenue leads to all the answers which may be discoverable. The purpose of this contribution is to suggest that some of the methods and investigative processes associated with the study of vernacular buildings may be appropriate to that of churches, with particular reference to understanding the evolution of plan and form; to indicate also some of the ways in which such processes complement insights from other approaches; and to illustrate the argument with hypotheses concerning the development of chancels and nave aisles in the thirteenth century. The focus is on 'method' and process rather than on drawing firm conclusions concerning the development of church buildings, and discussion of specific phenomena is illustrative rather than exhaustive or definitive, leading to suggestions rather than answers. In sketching a case that a 'vernacularist' mindset has something to offer the study of local churches, silent use is made of a large body of material collected for a forthcoming detailed study of the development of the parish churches of medieval Northamptonshire.

The idea that thought-processes similar to those habitually used for vernacular structures might be applied to church buildings may at first seem odd. Parish churches and parochial chapels are not normally considered as 'vernacular'. They have a nationwide distribution and a national, even international, context, being built at the same time as, and deploying architectural styles similar to, hundreds of other buildings erected for similar purposes in places both near and far. Many were erected in whole or part by wealthy and well-connected patrons, and when, from the 1220s, rectors were made responsible for the upkeep of the chancel,<sup>1</sup> many more had already been drawn into the spheres of influence of some of the greatest ecclesiastical and secular institutions and men who owned their advowson. Throughout

the Middle Ages there are significant numbers of parochial churches, and even more elements of such buildings, which can be illuminated by the questions posed by, methods applied to, and insights derived from, the study of art history and 'high' architecture. Some of those techniques are indeed essential for the understanding of every church building, for it is often only the analysis of architectural and decorative style which enables phases to be dated.

There is, however, another side to the coin of patronage, for the same legislation that made rectors responsible for the upkeep of the chancel required the parishioners to assume responsibility for the remainder of the building.<sup>2</sup> The means by which this duty was discharged varied: a building or rebuilding could be undertaken by the lord of the manor or other wealthy patron(s), or it could be funded by the parish community as a whole. In both cases the scale and quality of the work varied according to the connections and wealth of the funder. Rich donors and wealthy communities (such as those of the many East Anglian towns) could afford to bring in high-calibre craftsmen with experience of the latest developments and styles, but poorer ones, typical of many rural parishes, could afford less sophisticated craftsmen whose products were often simpler and plainer and display strong regional characteristics. Regional character may have been reinforced by local copying: in 1425–6, for example, the parishioners of Walberswick, Suffolk, instructed the masons Richard Russell of Dunwich and Adam Powle of Blythborough, to build a tower which copied features of that at Tunstall, and specified doorways and windows like those at nearby Halesworth;<sup>3</sup> and in 1491 the parishioners of Bodmin required that their new pews should be like those at Plympton and the pulpit like that at Moreton in Hemstead.<sup>4</sup> Some regional aspects are similar to those found in what we today consider vernacular architecture: an example might be late-medieval rood screens, those of East Anglia, like much contemporary timber-framing in the region, being light and slender, while those in the south west or the Welsh Marches sharing the heavier nature of the local traditions of framing.<sup>5</sup> The craftsmen employed in the construction of screens and roofs may have been the same as those who built the local houses, perhaps particularly in regions like Kent where the same type of roof might be used for either structure; but that the relationship between what is today considered strictly vernacular architecture and that found in churches was not, or was not always, direct is apparent from the fact that there are parts of the country where although there was a distinctive ecclesiastical roof type (such as the wagon roof of the south west), it differs from that found in other kinds of building.<sup>6</sup> This may suggest the involvement of discrete groups of craftsmen, perhaps mirroring what appear to be separate mechanisms for the supply of timber,<sup>7</sup> or the same craftsmen may have worked within more than one tradition; whichever is true – and it may have differed with time and place – the regional nature of much church carpentry is well established.

No matter what the size and architectural sophistication of churches built for parochial worship, which varies considerably, in the majority of cases their underlying plan and form are drawn from a quite restricted range of possible types, extending from two cells (nave and chancel) with a bell-cote, upwards to nave and chancel each flanked by aisles, and a bell tower. These types, moreover, bear little

relation to those of greater churches, with their cross-shaped or cruciform plans, processional ways around the choir, and elaborated east ends. They are a separate development, erected for functions overlapping with, but different from, those of monasteries and cathedrals, and with forms adapted for their own purposes.<sup>8</sup> In this sense it may be possible to argue that, in terms of plan, local churches are as 'vernacular' as what we call 'vernacular' medieval houses, for their form has no more in common with the forms of greater churches than has the standard tripartite plan of the peasant house with the central element of the plans of many greater houses. Without going that far, one of the contentions advanced here is that the plan, form and evolution of local churches should be seen in their own terms, as the product of an essentially pragmatic set of responses to a common set of functional problems which evolved with the changing nature of medieval religion, and that the key to the functional evolution has to a significant extent to be sought in analysis of patterns of evolution in the fabric itself rather than in written sources.

Given that parishes were part of a formal hierarchical structure, and that their churches served a common set of functions, it might be expected that bishops or metropolitans would have imposed some kind of guiding principle upon their design, perhaps a blueprint in the form of a theme with variations, at least some recommendations. The means for such regulation certainly existed, from the second quarter of the thirteenth century, in the substantial body of diocesan legislation which followed the Fourth Lateran Council (1215),<sup>9</sup> and its enforcement by archdeacons' visitations. The most that is found, though, is a naming of those parts of the church which most commonly existed or, rather, were essential – the chancel, the nave and the *campanile* (meaning any form of structure for holding bells, not necessarily a tower). They, along with the fact that the windows of the chancel should be glazed, are only ever mentioned in relation to the stipulation that the rector was responsible for the upkeep of the chancel and the parishioners of the rest,<sup>10</sup> or of the related issue of what an archdeacon should inspect. The only other occasion on which an element of the building itself is mentioned comes in one of the most detailed pieces of legislation, in which Bishop Quinil<sup>11</sup> of Exeter, in 1287, commanded that anyone wishing to build in a church an altar with its own ceiling and roof (that is, a new compartment) should first seek his permission so that he could ensure that there was a sufficient endowment for its upkeep without adding to the burdens of the parish.<sup>12</sup> There is no hint that bishops tried to make the buildings in their dioceses conform to any kind of model: there is no suggestion that some elements of the cathedral might be copied, nor even a vague formulaic statement that parish churches should wherever possible conform to what was customary in the diocese or archdeaconry. As with all other forms of church 'art', the legislation and the visitations were aimed at no more than ensuring that the parish priest did his job competently, that the church and cemetery were in good repair, and that the necessary minima of space, accoutrements and equipment were present and suitable.<sup>13</sup> The last were often enumerated in increasing detail through the thirteenth century, as the requirements of ceremonial grew, with specification of the types of books required in each church, the minimum number of vestments, the kinds of cloths and vessels, and the materials of which the pyx and font should be made,

along with direction as to who was to supply some of the more important fixtures of the church including the image of the patron saint and the Virgin flanking the altar.<sup>14</sup> Bishops could, therefore, enter detail when they felt the necessity, but they tended not to move beyond an enforceable minimum.

Given the lack of central direction, one of the places where clues as to the factors which determined the form of parochial churches might be found is the one thing they all had in common, the formal liturgy practised within them. Part of the liturgy, particularly the canon of the Mass, was subject to customs common to Western Christendom as a whole; much of the rest was adapted by each diocese, though from the second half of the thirteenth century to the middle of the fourteenth the Use of Sarum gradually spread throughout the Province of Canterbury (except in the Hereford diocese).<sup>15</sup> Attractive though it would be to see an over-riding influence of liturgy in church design, it holds less prospect than might be supposed of assisting understanding of the form of local churches, for the action of the liturgy in the majority of parishes is scarcely known. The forms – the words – of the various services should have conformed to those of the Use, as prescribed by bishops in their diocesan legislation, and there is no reason to doubt that such was the case. But it is far from clear how the ceremonial attached to the words was adapted for local circumstances with all their variations of clergy number (often, in the late Middle Ages, from month to month in a single church), and of size, shape and disposition of church building and furnishing. Salisbury, for which the principal Use was written, was a cathedral with numerous clergy, a separate choir, many altars, significant circulation space particularly around the choir, and a claustral complex. In a thirteenth-century parish church there might only be one clergyman and a parish clerk, and even at the end of the Middle Ages, by when there might also be variable numbers of chantry and stipendiary priests, the complement was small by comparison and the building altogether different – seldom transepts or a choir ambulatory for processions; sometimes only one nave aisle or none; often no west doorway or only a very small one; no cloister. In such varied circumstances local priests must have made their own adaptations and radical simplifications to the ceremonial parts of the prescribed services. Even if they annotated their service books, such books were almost all destroyed by state action at the Reformation, but it is more probable that, like today's clergy, many did not write everything down, simply following and adapting their own precedents. With few exceptions, the action of the liturgy is unknown.

That bishops understood the existence of variation seems to be confirmed by their legislation, with its focus on the minimum which was acceptable and enforceable. Hence, for example, there is a recognition, even if in a tone approaching regret, that there might only be a single priest;<sup>16</sup> similarly, small and poor places are conjured up by the often-repeated injunction that there should be at least two lights when Mass was chanted, and that the one on the altar should be of wax,<sup>17</sup> a simplification from the two altar lights on the altar stipulated by Innocent III.<sup>18</sup> Among the books required by the parish, which are frequently listed from the second quarter of the thirteenth to the first quarter of the sixteenth century, it is those which contained the words of the service which are most prominent – what the statutes for the diocese of Exeter written between 1227 and 1234 describe as,

'books suitable for chanting psalms . . . and for reading'<sup>19</sup> – along with the Calendar and other aids for maintaining the correct cycles and sequences of services and feasts. Strikingly absent from such lists of books is the Processional, the ultimate book of ceremonial, perhaps because it was so specifically tailored to the plan of Salisbury Cathedral (though by the end of the Middle Ages such books were to be found in at least some parishes<sup>20</sup>).

Even if discussion is restricted to worship, excluding all forms of secular activity conducted within churches,<sup>21</sup> formal liturgy, as in every age, was in any case only a small part of what was performed in churches – informal, 'unofficial', personal devotion also had to be accommodated. Here, the difficulty of understanding the requirements placed on the building is even greater since, of their nature, the majority of such devotions were performed privately by often illiterate people following and evolving oral and practical custom, their unremarkable activities unrecorded. From the late fourteenth century, and especially after about 1460, it becomes possible to see something of these kinds of activity, which vary across the country, through the increasing number of surviving wills, which often contain bequests for a variety of devotions extending from Masses to aid the soul in Purgatory to gifts of money for lights in front of specified images or even of fabrics with which to clothe the images.<sup>22</sup> Such evidence can in some places be supplemented by that from churchwardens' accounts, and for the same period there also survive primers or lay folks' prayer books, devotional texts and various forms of religious poetry, all of which give insights into private religion. Much of the evidence of these kinds is only demonstrably relevant to the middling to upper levels of society – the minority who had sufficient wealth for a written will to be worth making, and those, often the same people, who were literate – while many of the best-known devotional texts were produced by people of exceptional spiritual activity (such as Margery Kempe). It is not easy to understand how far members of lower social groups shared in exactly the same devotional culture as their better-off fellows, or how far spread through society, particularly rural society, was the influence of the writings and thought of individuals like Richard Rolle of Hampole, though from the middle of the fourteenth century the broad devotional culture can be understood in some detail.<sup>23</sup>

Against this background, even allowing for the destruction of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the evidence of the surviving form, furnishings and decoration of parochial churches itself is among the most important primary sources for trying to understand the nature of many of the activities accommodated within the buildings, and for seeking to understand the changing ways in which daily religion was practised and experienced by the majority of the population through the medieval centuries. Local churches therefore need to be approached in a range of ways, including ones similar to those routinely adopted for the kinds of poorly documented structure more conventionally considered 'vernacular'. Similar to, rather than the same as, because the documentary, textual and contextual evidence – at least for the later Middle Ages – is greater than that for the majority of vernacular houses, so that it is possible to build up a less uncertain, though still partial, cultural filter through which to try to 'read' the buildings with medieval eyes.

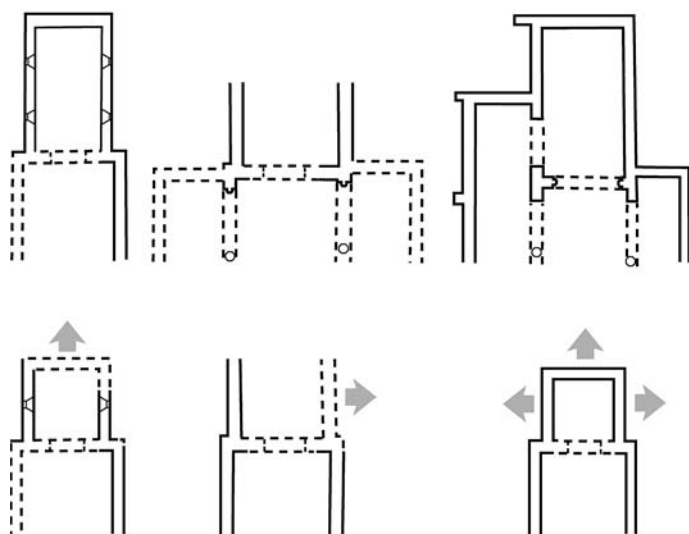
The implications of such an approach can be sketched by brief



consideration of two of the most common developments of churches in the century or so after 1150. Both are well known: the first, which relates to the evolution of the chancel builds on work already published elsewhere in greater specificity and detail;<sup>24</sup> it forms the necessary background to the second, concerning early nave aisles, on which more precise work is yet to be completed.

At the start of the twelfth century, the chancel was generally a small square compartment, usually narrower than the nave by about a wall thickness on each side, and also lower than the nave. Its windows were often not large and were unglazed, so that the interior was often quite dark as well as small, and it seems that the chancel arch was often relatively narrow and low, though this is difficult to demonstrate since later enlargement of the arches has usually destroyed evidence for the early form of the openings. By the end of the first quarter of the thirteenth century, the typical new chancel was perhaps one and two-thirds times as long as it was wide, taller than its earlier counterpart, had larger windows, particularly at the east, was as wide as the nave and had a larger chancel arch. In some buildings which had evolved gradually through the twelfth century this stage was reached through more than one phase, sometimes with a rounded eastern apse having been an intermediate stage; in addition, some chancels were not completely modified into the newer form, a significant number only having been widened on one side rather than symmetrically to north and south (Figure 3.1).

The reasons for the precise form of the modified type of chancel are partly connected with the introduction of the new, Gothic, architectural style, which was governed by proportions different from those of Norman Romanesque, and the contemporaneous increasing availability of window glass which rendered larger windows more practical. But they are more than the result of fashion, since the development of the chancel also took place in a liturgical context in which the sanctity of the host was increasingly emphasized as the centuries-old debate concerning the nature of the Mass was finally settled in favour of transubstantiation, made a



3.1  
Development of  
twelfth-century  
chancels in the  
later Middle Ages  
(east at top).  
Left: St Andrew,  
Collyweston,  
Northamptonshire.  
Centre: All  
Saints, Pytchley,  
Northamptonshire.  
Right: SS Peter and  
Paul, Courteenhall,  
Northamptonshire.

Doctrine of the Church in 1215 after it had already been widely accepted for some time. In the mature and most widespread version of that belief, the host became the actual body of Christ at the moment of consecration and communion was an actual, living, physical re-enactment of the crucifixion. This led to an increasing emphasis on the creation of a worthy setting for Christ within the church, as Innocent III made clear shortly before he became Pope in 1198, when he discussed liturgical colours and the provision of lights on the altar.<sup>25</sup> As these ideas spread through the church and reached the level of the ordinary parish during the thirteenth century, so chancels were enlarged and made lighter, brighter, more worthy places.

Combined with the sense of seemliness, and providing a related impetus towards making chancels lighter, was a desire to enable people in the nave to see more clearly the action at the altar. The background to this was that lay folk were not deemed worthy to come into close contact with the transubstantiated host, except when receiving communion, which was restricted to a handful of times a year. As compensation, they were deemed able to obtain the benefits of the Mass simply from seeing the consecrated host. This led to the creation of the ceremony of the elevation of the host immediately after the words of consecration ('Hoc est corpus meum'), the priest pausing in the prayer and lifting the host above his head for a moment so that it could be seen by the laity behind him. This form of elevation first appears in diocesan legislation in early thirteenth-century Paris, perhaps during the episcopate of Peter of Nemours (1208–19), and spread quite rapidly thereafter.<sup>26</sup>

The pace at which chancels were adapted to the new circumstances varied according to the zeal with which bishops promoted the new teaching and its implications within their dioceses, and with the economic means of the rector, patron and parish who had to pay for the new or enhanced chancel. Examination of the surviving buildings enables an assessment to be made of the speed with which the full impact of the new teaching was felt in each diocese, archdeaconry and local parish community. The way that impact was articulated in local churches was, as noted above, never the subject of legislation and bears relatively little relationship to contemporary developments in greater churches: it was arrived at pragmatically as parish communities and priests worked out what was necessary, tempered locally by what could be afforded, often adapting and working round existing parts of their buildings, informing themselves by precedent and what had been done in other parish churches of which they had knowledge.

The relationship between legislation, or other prescriptions for belief and ceremonial, and parish churches is even more complicated than this might imply. Legislation and prescription often – perhaps usually – follow widespread acceptance and practice rather than being innovative, so that the origins of change in response to developing eucharistic beliefs should be sought earlier, during the period, primarily from the 1060s onwards, during which the debate on the nature of the real presence moved decisively in favour of transubstantiation. During that time, before there was a settled doctrine, there was even less possibility than later of central guidance concerning the appropriate nature of local churches, and parishioners and patrons were left to work out as best they could what was suitable. The result was a series of piecemeal, almost experimental, developments in the form of parish churches

in which increased reverence for the host, and with it the priest, led to a physical distancing of the altar, the scene of priestly action, from the laity by its displacement eastwards within the building, and by the first lengthenings of chancels.<sup>27</sup> For this period, for most of which documentary sources, bureaucratic prescription and written scholarly debate never existed in the way they did from the thirteenth century onwards, the only way to begin to understand how religion was experienced by ordinary people is, as with what we consider 'vernacular' structures, to analyse patterns in the forms of the buildings they erected to accommodate worship, acknowledging that the evidence is partial, and that it should be supplemented wherever possible by what can be learnt of the religious culture of the time.

The second example of the assistance which may be brought to the study of churches by analytical thinking similar to that employed for vernacular buildings concerns the addition of aisles to the nave in the late twelfth and, more particularly, the first half of the thirteenth century.<sup>28</sup> The point in presenting it here is not to produce a definitive answer to the problem of understanding the emergence and nature of early aisles, but to make a case for a way of approaching the issue.

Not all new churches built after the middle of the twelfth century were provided with either one or two aisles, nor did every existing church have an aisle or aisles added. With the exception of a small number of very wide structures placed under independent roofs, most early aisles were narrow, some as little as 6-feet wide internally, and had external walls little higher; they were, therefore, small and dark (Figures 3.2 and 3.3). The number of such aisles which were actually built – as opposed to numbers which survive – is difficult to estimate on account of later replacement both of the aisles themselves (with wider and taller ones) and of their arcades (with taller ones). Of approximately three hundred medieval churches in Northamptonshire, there is definite evidence for the existence of one or more narrow aisles by the end of the twelfth century in about a dozen (though it is likely that there were more), and for a gradual rise in number over the next hundred years until, at the end of the thirteenth century, most naves had two aisles. By about the 1260s, at least a sixth of churches had narrow aisles, wider ones (about half the width of the nave) becoming more common thereafter. The chronology and form of narrow aisles were shared by small churches, which evolved from a simple two- or three-cell plan, and by the larger cross-shaped structures on the sites of higher-status churches (including 'minsters') which had until this period lacked aisles.

The question arises as to why aisles began to be perceived as necessary in parish buildings from the later twelfth century onwards, and why they took the form they did. In broad terms, three answers to the first question have been suggested.

The first theory, firmly lodged in both the literature and the popular mind, is that aisles provided accommodation for larger communities at a time of increasing population.<sup>29</sup> Despite the chronological coincidence of the construction first of narrow and then of enlarged aisles with that of the expansion of population between the mid-twelfth and the mid-fourteenth century, the idea fails to take account of the need, which arose at the same time as aisles began to appear, for members of the laity all to be able simultaneously to see the elevation of the host from a stationary

### 3.2

All Saints, Orton,  
Northamptonshire,  
late twelfth- or  
early thirteenth-

century south aisle.  
Top: West end  
showing the  
lowness of the  
outer wall before  
heightening in the  
fourteenth century.  
Bottom: Interior  
looking east.

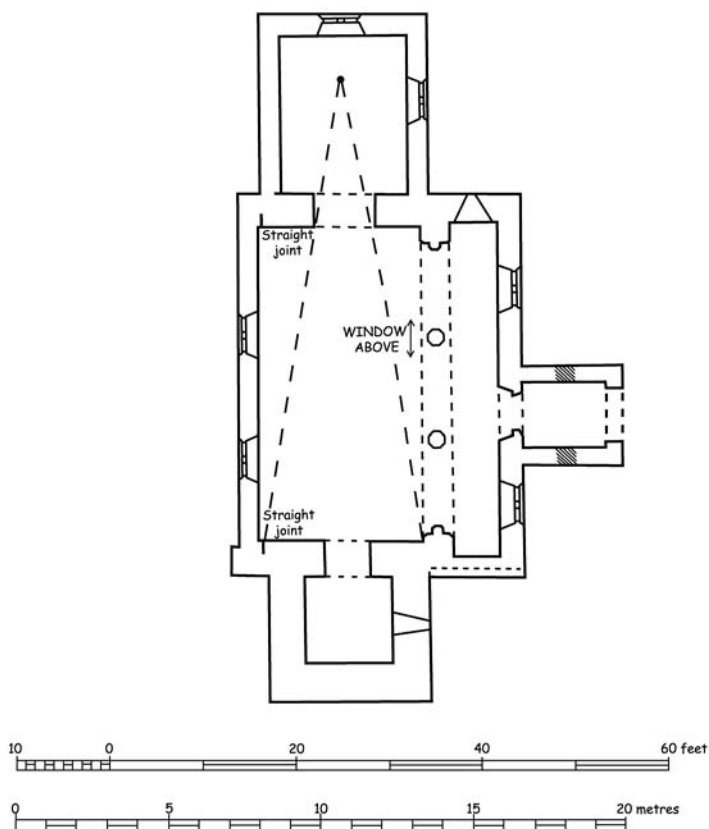
The piscina is  
secondary, and the  
nave arcade was  
replaced when  
the outer wall was  
heightened and  
refenestrated in the  
fourteenth century.



kneeling position west of the chancel arch. Even in a church with a wide chancel arch, the small, very precise, point formed by the elevated host, which was held aloft static and only for a moment, could not always be seen from every part of the nave, and aisles rarely created additional space useful for this purpose (see Figure 3.3). In addition, the narrowness of the aisles meant that they would have provided additional standing or kneeling room for so few people that the investment in their construction seems out of proportion with the benefit, and in many parishes for which numbers of inhabitants can be estimated, it would still have been possible to squeeze everyone into the nave even at the height of the pre-Black Death population expansion.<sup>30</sup>

A second explanation which has sometimes been advanced for the addition of aisles is that they were used for processions,<sup>31</sup> and that processions increased in importance as the Use of Sarum began to be adopted. This is certainly theoretically possible, but the lowness and narrowness of some of the aisles makes it difficult to envisage how such spaces could ever have been very satisfactory for the purpose, as carrying crosses and banners would have been awkward and turning room limited. It also overlooks the fact that processions were a significant feature of Anglo-Saxon liturgy, performed in and around churches long before aisles were found necessary.<sup>32</sup>

The third idea concerning aisles is in many ways the most obvious one



3.3  
All Saints, Orton,  
Northamptonshire  
(east at top). That  
the narrow south  
aisle was added to  
an earlier nave is  
indicated by the  
blocked window  
above the arcade.  
The dotted lines  
delimit the area of  
the nave and aisle  
from which the  
elevated host could  
be seen.

– that they were, as in the later Middle Ages, used for additional altars and perhaps associated burials. This has the merit of allowing for a continuity of function through the later Middle Ages, but it also contains a danger of reading back into the early period a model derived from the better-documented later time when aisles were of a different form. It is in fact not immediately apparent how the dark and cramped space at the east end of the narrow aisles would have been particularly satisfactory for altars or chapels before the walls were heightened and larger windows created – and the space created for burials (as for living parishioners) was relatively small. On the other hand, in terms of chronology, it might be possible to see an increasing need for additional altars as a symptom of the slow maturation of belief in Purgatory, made an official Doctrine in 1274, which led to the proliferation of Masses for the dead and the need for several altars in even humble churches, but it is doubtful whether such a need can be pushed back into the twelfth century, particularly in small rural parishes.

A more satisfactory approach to explaining the form and chronology of early aisles might start from the identification of a change in some aspect of parochial religious practice which is both more exactly contemporary with their early development, and to accommodate which the early form of aisles would seem reasonably well adapted. The quest can only be pursued cautiously as the sources are so sketchy, but there is a possibility. The known change with which the creation of the aisles most nearly coincides is the maturation of belief in transubstantiation. As discussed above, that belief gradually led to the withdrawal from the laity of access to the host, and with it of the most direct form of participation in the Mass. In the following two or three generations, images of saints began to assume increasing importance in parish churches and, most particularly, the cult of the Virgin acquired greater popularity and significance than before.<sup>33</sup> That may not be coincidence for, although not subject to the same kind of transubstantiating miracle as the host, all images were, throughout the Middle Ages, understood to be more than representations or commemorations, bringing the beholder into spiritual contact and the semi-presence of the person depicted.<sup>34</sup> Access to images of saints, whose souls were in the presence of God, may therefore have provided a partial compensation for the withdrawal of the host. In this context, the Virgin is particularly important, for she, uniquely, shared with Christ the position of being fully in heaven; unlike all other saints, whose souls alone were in God's presence, belief in the Assumption, elaborated in the twelfth century,<sup>35</sup> meant that the Virgin enjoyed the heavenly state in the perfection of the union of her body with her soul.<sup>36</sup> If access to Christ himself, in the form of the host, was restricted, an image of Christ, or one of the Virgin, provided the most direct and potent means by which the laity could approach the divine person. At a general level, the importance of images for the laity is demonstrated by the fact that, from the second quarter of the thirteenth century, episcopal legislation made the parishioners responsible for their provision and upkeep.<sup>37</sup> The practical association of images and the laity can be exemplified by the successive painted images of the Virgin on the piers of the north nave arcade of St Alban's Abbey, which have been shown to trace an eastwards expansion of the area of the nave used by the laity during the course of the thirteenth century.<sup>38</sup>

In parish buildings, images, whether of the Virgin or other saints, were

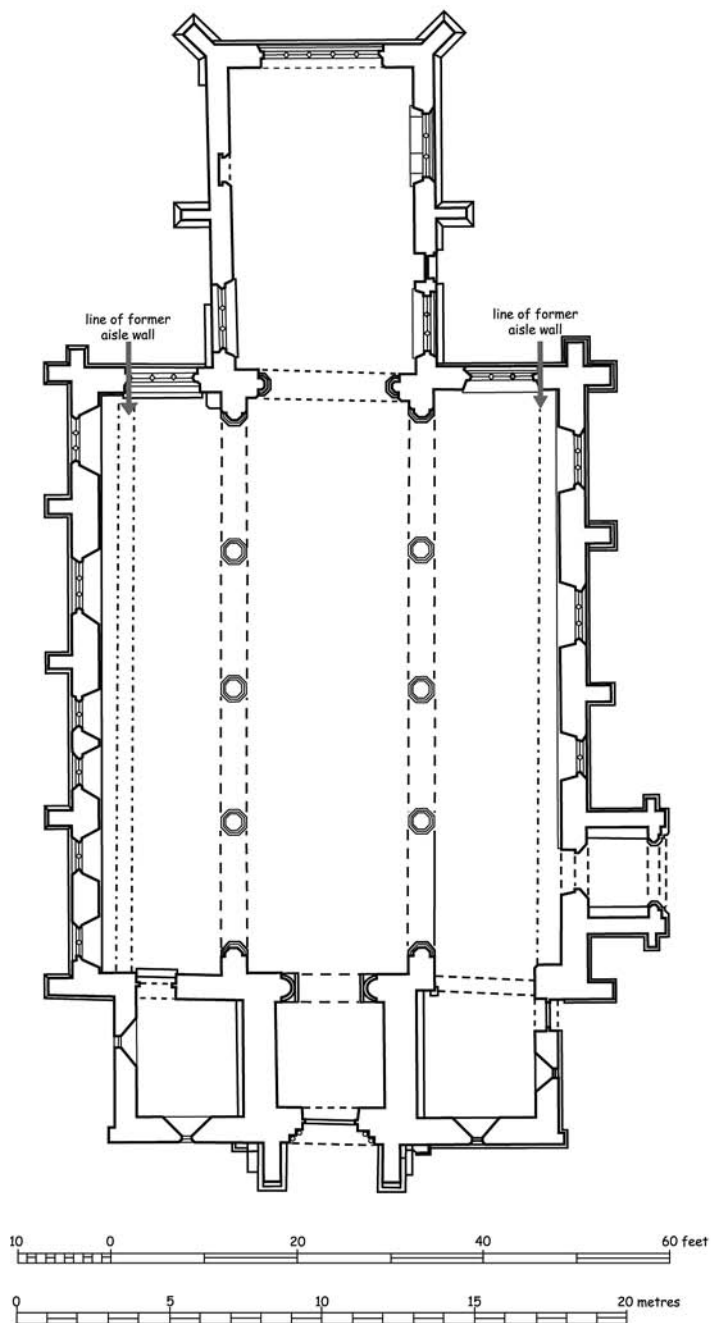
presumably first placed in the nave. As they began to attract lights, offerings and other devotional clutter, they may have become a nuisance, have got in the way of those attending formal services, and have impeded movement. If that is correct, a narrow aisle could have solved the problem: the images could have been placed either in the aisle or against the piers, and devotional offerings and their accoutrements would similarly not have radically impinged on the area of the nave itself. There would have been no need for the aisle to be wide or particularly tall, and the fact that images had lights burning before them would have alleviated the darkness of the low aisles, which could even have served to heighten a sense of mystique in approaching semi-living beings from the company of heaven.

If this idea were correct, it would suggest that the function of aisles changed, or that they attracted additional functions. By the later Middle Ages, in addition to housing images, they accommodated the altars needed for the ever-increasing number of Masses required to serve evolving beliefs surrounding Purgatory, and space before them for the burials and semi-living effigies of the wealthier deceased who sought to display their status even in death by benefitting from visible monuments and proximity to the site where Christ entered the building at the celebration of the Mass. As the function of the aisles changed, so too did the form (more space and light being required), so that new aisles were typically wider and taller than previously, and old ones were almost always widened and heightened to similar proportions (Figure 3.4), the greater height allowing the nave arcades to be proportionately heightened (though not always at the same time). Those later developments are part of what makes it so difficult to understand the purpose of the earlier aisles, for the lack of written evidence directly relevant to their function is compounded by the loss of early wall-paintings, furnishings, images and image brackets which, if not removed by later-medieval phases of building, seldom survived Protestant destruction of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. What is left is often not even the shell of the earlier phase, only fragments to indicate its former existence.

The interpretations advanced here are not fully developed, but it is hoped that they will have illustrated the central point that parochial churches should be understood on their own terms. As with greater churches, analysis must take into account both the precise forms of the buildings and what can be understood of the changing needs of the communities which built and used them,<sup>39</sup> rather than attempt to force parish churches into the mould of imitating cathedrals and monasteries designed for different purposes with larger establishments of clergy and liturgical requirements for elaborate processional and ceremonial space. Given the slight survival of written sources for what actually happened in parochial churches for most of the Middle Ages, it is the buildings themselves which provide much of the evidence for their precise functions. The patterning in the evolution of form is a key, even if an imperfect one, to understanding changes in religious practice. In places where churches were not rebuilt as new in the later Middle Ages some of that evolution is often still apparent. Its variable pace and degree of elaboration, even in proximate parishes, suggests that the buildings evolved 'from below' in an essentially pragmatic

### 3.4

All Saints,  
Nassington,  
Northamptonshire  
(east at top). The  
present nave  
aisles replace  
lower and much  
narrower ones of  
about 1200 which  
had been built on  
to an originally  
pre-Conquest nave.  
The north aisle is of  
the later thirteenth  
century, the  
south of the early  
fourteenth.





way, responding to the changing devotional needs of the local community tempered by what its members could afford at any particular time.

## Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Dr Christopher Currie and Dr Catherine Oakes for discussion and advice. Amanda Daw kindly drew Figures 3.1, 3.3 and 3.4.

## Notes

- 1 The earliest reference to the division of responsibility is in the Synodal Statutes of Bishop Peter des Roches for the Diocese of Winchester, 1224?, cap. 11, in *Councils and Synods with other Documents Relating to the English Church. Volume 2, AD 1205–1313*, eds F. M. Powicke and C. R. Cheney, 2 vols (Oxford, 1964) (hereafter C&S II part 1 and II part 2), II part 1, pp. 125–37 (p. 128); cf. Synodal Statutes of Bishop Robert Bingham for the Diocese of Salisbury, 1238×1244, cap. 2, C&S II part 1, pp. 364–88 (p. 367).
- 2 C. Drew, *Early Parochial Organisation in England: The Origin of the Office of Churchwarden*, St Anthony's Hall Publications 7 (London, 1954), p. 8.
- 3 The agreement is British Library, Additional Charters 17634; it is printed in *Walberswick Churchwardens' Accounts, AD 1450–1499*, ed. R. W. M. Lewis (London, 1947), p. vii, and L. F. Salzman, *Building in England Down to 1540: A Documentary History*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1967), pp. 499–500; with Salzman, I assume that the *Dunstale Well* of the document is Tunstall.
- 4 *The Bodmin Register*, ed. J. Wallis (Bodmin, 1827–38), pp. 33–5. For similar examples of using local buildings as reference-points, see Salzman, *Building in England*, pp. 490–1 and 547–9.
- 5 The difference in the style of screens has been noted before, especially by C. P. Graves, *The Form and Fabric of Belief: An Archaeology of the Lay Experience of Religion in Medieval Norfolk and Devon*, British Archaeological Reports 385 (Oxford, 2000). She rightly points out that this may have influenced the laity's experience of the liturgy, seen through the screen, but it is more likely that such influence was a consequence of the regional difference in carpentry technique than that differences in liturgical practice and clerical control would have dictated the adoption of heavier framing for screens in the west.
- 6 I am grateful to Dr Christopher Currie for discussion concerning this matter.
- 7 M. Bridge, 'The Contribution of Dendrochronology to Church Archaeology', *Church Archaeology*, 11 (2007), pp. 43–9 (p. 44).
- 8 For a similar point, see P. Draper, *The Formation of English Gothic: Architecture and Identity* (London, 2006), pp. 175–6.
- 9 The legislation was first systematically edited in *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae, a synodo Verolamiensi, AD 446, ad Londinensem, AD 1717*, ed. D. Wilkins, 4 vols (London, 1737) (hereafter: *Concilia Britanniae*). That for the thirteenth and early fourteenth century is available in the modern edition of C&S.
- 10 See, for example, Customs of the Diocese of Salisbury, 1228×1256, cap. 8, C&S II part 1, pp. 510–15 (pp. 512–13); Synodal Statutes of Bishop Peter Quivel for the Diocese of Exeter, 1287, cap. 9, C&S II part 2, pp. 982–1059 (p. 1003); Constitutions of John Stratford, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1342, *Concilia Britanniae*, II, pp. 696–702 (pp. 697–8); Constitutions for the Province of York, 1518 (repeating Walter Gray in the thirteenth century), *Concilia Britanniae*, III, pp. 662–92 (p. 678).
- 11 Although, in common with other scholars of their day, the editors of C&S use the form 'Quivel' (hence the citation here of his Statutes under that form of the name), it has recently been determined that the name is in fact 'Quinil': see N. Orme, 'Quinil, Peter (c.1230–1291)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004), online edn, May 2005 [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22969 (accessed 22 August 2009)].
- 12 Statutes of Peter Quivel for Exeter, 1287, cap. 9, p. 1003.

- 13 For detailed discussion, though not so specifically in relation to church *buildings*, which arrives at a similar conclusion, see P. Binski, *Becket's Crown: Art and Imagination in Gothic England 1170–1300* (London, 2004), pp. 149–77.
- 14 See, for example, Council for the Province of Canterbury, 1222, cap. 16, *C&S II* part 1, pp. 100–25 (pp. 110–11); Customs for the Diocese of Salisbury, 1228×1256, cap. 8, pp. 512–13; Synodal Statutes of Bishop William Blois for the Diocese of Worcester, 1229, cap. 2–6, *C&S II* part 1, pp. 169–81 (pp. 171–2); Statutes of Robert Bingham for Salisbury, 1238×1244, cap. 29, pp. 378–9; Synodal Statutes of Bishop Walter de Cantilupe for the Diocese of Worcester, 1240, cap. 2, *C&S II* part 1, pp. 294–325 (p. 296); Statutes of Peter Quivel for Exeter, 1287, cap. 12, pp. 1005–6; So-called Statutes of Robert Winchelsey, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1295×1313, *C&S II* part 2, pp. 1382–93; Constitutions of Walter Reynold, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1322, *Concilia Britanniae*, II, pp. 512–14 (p. 513); Synodal Statutes of Sodor, 1350, *Concilia Britanniae*, III, pp. 10–11 (p. 11); Constitutions for the Diocese of York (repeating Walter Gray in the thirteenth century), 1518, p. 676. The earliest unequivocal reference to the altar images is Statutes of Peter Quivel for Exeter, 1287, cap. 12, p. 1006, clearly legislating after such images were widespread: for discussion of this provision see R. Marks, *Image and Devotion in Late Medieval England* (Stroud, 2004), pp. 73–4.
- 15 N. Morgan, 'The Introduction of the Sarum Calendar into the Dioceses of England in the Thirteenth Century', in *Thirteenth Century England*, 8, eds M. Prestwich, R. Britnell and R. Frame (Woodbridge, 2001), pp. 179–206 (especially pp. 184–5, 197–8).
- 16 See, for example, Statutes of Bishop Grosseteste for the Diocese of Lincoln, 1239, cap. 32, *C&S II* part 1, pp. 265–78 (p. 273); Synodal Statutes for the Diocese of Ely, 1239×1256, with additions 1256×1276, cap. 20, *C&S II* part 1, pp. 515–23 (p. 519); Synodal Statutes of Bishop William Raleigh for the Diocese of Norwich, 1240×1243, cap. 34, *C&S II* part 1, pp. 341–64 (p. 350); Synodal Statutes of Bishop Nicholas of Farnham for the Diocese of Durham, 1241×1249, cap. 41, *C&S II* part 1, pp. 421–35 (p. 432); Synodal Statutes of Bishop William Raleigh for the Diocese of Winchester, 1247, cap. 39, *C&S II* part 1, pp. 403–16 (p. 408); Acts of Synod held by Bishop Simon Langham at Ely, 1362×1366, *Concilia Britanniae*, III, pp. 59–61 (pp. 60–61).
- 17 Statutes for Ely, 1239×1256, cap. 36, p. 522; Synodal Statutes of Bishop William Bitton I for the Diocese of Bath and Wells, 1258, cap. 5, *C&S II* part 1, pp. 586–626 (pp. 592–3); Synodal Statutes of Bishop John Gervais for the Diocese of Winchester, 1262×1265, cap. 9, *C&S II* part 1, pp. 700–23 (p. 704); Synodal Constitutions of Henry Woodlock, Bishop of Winchester, 1308, *Concilia Britanniae*, II, pp. 293–301 (p. 295); Constitutions of Walter Reynold, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1322, p. 513. See also Statutes of Peter Quivel for Exeter, 1287, cap. 4, p. 990, and especially Synodal Statutes for an English Diocese, 1222×1225, cap. 25, *C&S II* part 1, pp. 139–54 (p. 144).
- 18 Binski, *Becket's Crown*, p. 156.
- 19 Fragment of Synodal Statutes of Bishop William Brimere for the Diocese of Exeter, 1225×1237, cap. 13, *C&S II* part 1, pp. 227–37 (p. 232).
- 20 They are mentioned, for instance, in some of the inventories of church goods included with churchwardens' accounts – see, for example, *St John the Baptist, Glastonbury. Churchwardens' Accounts 1366 to 1587*, ed. W. E. Daniell (Sherborne, 1902), inventory of 1428, pp. 15–16.
- 21 Discussed by J. G. Davies, *The Secular Use of Church Buildings* (London, 1968).
- 22 Compare, for example, the kinds of bequest revealed by the evidence gathered together in R. M. Serjeantson and H. I. Longden, 'The Parish Churches and Religious Houses of Northamptonshire: Their Dedications, Altars, Images and Lights', *Archaeological Journal*, 70 (1913), pp. 217–452, and in *Early Northampton Wills*, eds D. Edwards *et al.*, Northamptonshire Record Society 42 (Northampton, 2005), with that in J. Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity and Outward Splendour. Death and Remembrance in the Deanery of Dunwich, Suffolk, 1370–1547* (Woodbridge, 2001), and with that in P. S. Barnwell, '"Four Hundred Masses on the Four Fridays Next After My Decease." The Care of Souls in Fifteenth-Century All Saints', North Street, York', in *Mass and Parish in Late*

- Medieval England: The Use of York*, eds P. S. Barnwell, C. Cross and A. Rycraft (Reading, 2005), pp. 57–87.
- 23 For detailed discussion of religious culture in the later fourteenth and the early fifteenth century, and of the issue of how it affected different social groups, see J. Hughes, *Pastors and Visionaries. Religion and Secular Life in Late Medieval Yorkshire* (Woodbridge, 1988), the implications of which are wider than the title suggests.
- 24 P. S. Barnwell, 'The Laity, the Clergy and the Divine Presence: The Use of Space in Smaller Churches of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 157 (2004), pp. 41–60; cf. C. F. Davidson, 'Change and Change Back: The Development of English Parish Church Chancels', in *Continuity and Change in Christian Worship*, ed. R. N. Swanson, *Studies in Church History*, 35 (1999), pp. 65–77.
- 25 Innocent III, *Mysterium evangelicæ legis et sacramenti eucharistiae*, in *Patrologia Latina: Cursus Completus*, ed. J.-P. Migne, 221 vols (Paris, 1844–64), CCXVII, cols. 765–916, bk I cap. 32 (cols. 785–6) and bk II cap. 21 (col. 811). For a discussion, see Binski, *Becket's Crown*, pp. 156–7.
- 26 V. L. Kennedy, 'The Moment of Consecration and Elevation of the Host', *Mediæval Studies*, 6 (1944), pp. 121–50, with the chronology modified by V. L. Kennedy, 'The Date of the Parisian Decree on the Elevation of the Host', *Mediæval Studies*, 8 (1946), pp. 87–96. See also, M. Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 55–7. This does not mean, however, that this form of elevation was *invented* after 1208 – there is evidence that the Carthusians knew it from the mid-twelfth century (T. W. Drury, *Elevation in the Eucharist: Its History and Rationale* [Cambridge, 1907], p. 103) – but how far it had spread before then is unclear.
- 27 See Barnwell, 'The Laity'; cf. P. S. Barnwell, '"Churches Built for Priests"? The Evolution of Parish Churches in Northamptonshire from the Gregorian Reform to the Fourth Lateran Council', *Ecclesiology Today*, 32 (2004), pp. 7–23.
- 28 For another discussion of early aisles, which arrives at a different conclusion, see Draper, *Formation of English Gothic*, pp. 183–5.
- 29 For a detailed exposition, see L. J. Proudfoot, 'The Extension of Parish Churches in Medieval Warwickshire', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 9 (1983), pp. 231–46. See also, on this question, the wide-ranging discussion in R. Morris, *Churches in the Landscape* (London, 1989), pp. 289–95.
- 30 An example is Lillingstone Darell, Buckinghamshire – see P. S. Barnwell, 'The Medieval Churches of Whittlewood Forest', *Ecclesiology Today*, 41 (2008), pp. 3–28 (p. 21) – but the point is also true of the other eight surviving medieval churches of the Whittlewood Forest area.
- 31 Best expressed in A. H. Thompson, *The Ground Plan of the English Parish Church* (Cambridge, 1911), p. 66.
- 32 See M. Bradford Bedingfield, *The Dramatic Liturgy of Anglo-Saxon England*, *Anglo-Saxon Studies*, 1 (Woodbridge, 2002).
- 33 Marks, *Image and Devotion*, pp. 49–55; M. Rubin, *Mother of God: A History of the Virgin Mary* (London, 2009), pp. 177–88.
- 34 H. Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image Before the Era of Art* (London, 1994), esp. pp. 308, 351, 362, 410–19; cf. D. Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (London, 1989), esp. pp. 166–7.
- 35 C. Oakes, 'Ora Pro Nobis': *The Virgin as Intercessor in Medieval Art and Devotion* (Turnhout, 2008), pp. 27–32.
- 36 The complexities and subtleties of medieval thought concerning the fates of soul and body are succinctly discussed in S. Tugwell, *Human Immortality and the Redemption of Death* (London, 1990), pp. 125–74.
- 37 Customs for the Diocese of Salisbury, 1228×1256, cap. 8, pp. 512–13.
- 38 Binski, *Becket's Crown*, p. 155.
- 39 Compare P. Draper, 'Architecture and Liturgy', in *Age of Chivalry. Art in Plantagenet England 1200–1400*, eds J. Alexander and P. Binski (London, 1987), pp. 83–91 (p. 83).

## Chapter 4

# The Villa

## Ideal Type or Vernacular Variant?

*Elizabeth McKellar*

The single most important development in the layout and appearance of the middle-class house between the fifteenth and the late eighteenth century was in the introduction and spread of compact non-hierarchical forms. . . . It was in the suburbs and environs of London that the most powerful models, both architectural and social, were to appear. . . . These houses were, in effect, villas. (Nicholas Cooper, 1999)<sup>1</sup>

The villa is one of the most celebrated ideal architectural forms. James Ackerman, in his classic work on the type, highlighted its longevity and continuity of function through the ages as a rural or semi-rural retreat. However, as he discussed, while the ideology of the villa has remained remarkably intact the forms it has taken have varied widely, embracing all the major Western architectural styles. Ackerman presented the villa as essentially architecturally innovative and identified it with the modern, in contradistinction to what he called the 'traditional', farmhouse.<sup>2</sup> However, even Ackerman had to acknowledge points at which his progressive narrative broke down. Early fifteenth-century Italian villas, for example, did not follow the antique classical models being pursued in the cities, but rather maintained the fortified aspect of medieval castles.<sup>3</sup> Ancient villa life was revived in the Renaissance, therefore, initially in an architecturally conservative rather than innovative form.

Given the intermixing of classical and indigenous styles that is the hallmark of the introduction of the Renaissance into Britain one would expect to find a similar pattern in this country.<sup>4</sup> This is confirmed by the essays in the first book on the subject, published in 2007, *The Renaissance Villa in Britain 1500–1700*, a collection which highlights the diversity and plenitude of villa types in the early-modern period, and substantiated for the London area in Caroline Knight's *London's Country Houses* of 2009.<sup>5</sup> However, for the eighteenth century the villa in the British Isles has generally been associated with neo-Palladianism. It was Rudolf Wittkower, in his pioneering articles, who first established the villa as one of the archetypal buildings of

the Anglo-Palladian movement, an association later intensified in Summerson's work on the Georgian villa.<sup>6</sup> So strong has been the identification of the English villa with the white cuboid forms of Palladianism that other manifestations of the eighteenth-century villa have been largely ignored. This is less true in their Celtic context, as became evident in *The Georgian Villa*, edited by Dana Arnold, a collection which proved that there were many various and overlapping forms of the type.<sup>7</sup>

The existing secondary literature, however, tends to sustain the view of the English eighteenth-century villa as an architect-designed building type for the elite. Middle-class villas are generally not discussed, at least not those from before the turn of the century, when they became a widespread feature in a myriad of styles, particularly on the suburban fringes of towns and cities. This chapter will explore a range of suburban residences, especially smaller middle-class villas, in the London context in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These formed part of a pattern of villa building which was widespread across the capital from the sixteenth century onwards, driven by pronounced socio-economic trends for dispersal from the centre. The aim of the chapter is not to offer new research into individual examples, but rather to use a range of villas in one particular location, Greenwich, to see if examining them as a group can offer a new perspective on villas in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England. Villas will be discussed not as a particular building type nor as a stylistic phenomenon, but rather in relation to locality and social history. In repositioning villas in this way, as a topographical and social phenomenon, the chapter seeks to ask whether traditionally elite buildings can in fact be conceived as vernacular variants rather than as ideal types.

First, however, we need to consider the use of the term 'villa' in the period more closely. As Nicholas Cooper, John Archer and others have established, the word was being used in England from the early seventeenth century.<sup>8</sup> It is evident that from this date onwards it was applied to modest suburban homes around London, as opposed to the Palladian rural type situated at the centre of an agricultural estate. Henry Aldrich made the distinction between the two, writing in around 1700 that: 'The term villa, taken in its full sense, means a country house with a farm annexed; but we shall here understand no more by it than a house built for rural retirement'.<sup>9</sup> Roger North emphasized the novelty of the 'suburb villa' in 1698, commenting that it was compact '*alla moderna*' and was intended 'to retire to enjoy and sleep, with out pretence of enterテインement of many persons'.<sup>10</sup> Neither did the intense interest in the villa in the early eighteenth century do anything to fix usage more precisely. As Summerson commented: 'Robert Castell's *The Villas of the Ancients* (1728) may have given further currency to the word but one does not meet it often until the 1750s when it is a frequent synonym for the lesser kind of house'.<sup>11</sup> In this piece it is these 'lesser' or rather smaller houses I shall be focusing on, following the *Oxford English Dictionary*'s second definition of the villa: 'any residence of a superior type, in the suburbs of a town or in a residential district, such as is occupied by a person of the middle-class; also, any small better-class dwelling house, usually one which is detached or semi-detached' (1755).

In considering the smaller villa it is also essential to look at the suburbs. Suburban living intensified from the mid-seventeenth century as a result of changing

patterns in the relationship between home and work, the increasing affluence of the English middle class, improved travel links and a new urban culture.<sup>12</sup> As Nicholas Cooper and others have shown, elite outer-London dwellings which had the function if not the nomenclature of the villa were common from the late medieval period onwards.<sup>13</sup> Well-known surviving sixteenth- and seventeenth-century examples range from the moderately sized Sutton House in Hackney (c.1535) and Boston Manor in Brentford (1622) to the rather grander Holland House, Kensington (c.1605–7), of which fragments remain following bomb damage, and Ham House in Richmond erected in 1610 and remodelled 1637–8 and 1672–4. The latter demonstrates a pattern of adaptation and re-use which was common for outer-London residences. Daniel Defoe in his *Tour of Great Britain* of 1724–6 observed of the capital's suburban residences that:

these fine houses . . . are not, at least very few of them, the mansion houses of families, the ancient residencies of ancestors, the capital messuages of the estates, nor have the rich possessors any lands to a considerable value about them; but these are all houses of retreat . . . gentlemen's mere summer-houses, or citizen's country houses; whither they retire from the hurries of business, and from getting money, to draw their breath in a clear air, and to divert themselves and families in the hot weather; and they . . . are shut up, and as it were stripped of their inhabitants in the winter, who return to smoke and dirt, sin and seacoal . . . in the busy city.<sup>14</sup>

The villa therefore was but one manifestation of a much broader re-alignment of town and country which took place throughout the long eighteenth century in Britain, but which is seen in its earliest and most acute form in the London region.<sup>15</sup>

Defoe and his visual counterpart, John Rocque, who produced his map of *London, Westminster . . . and the Country near Ten Miles Round* in 1746, bear witness to the rapid expansion of outer London during the early to mid-eighteenth century.<sup>16</sup> Defoe devoted a substantial part of his account to the ever-expanding outparts for, as he wrote: 'The villages round London partake of the influence of London, so much, that it is observed as London is increased, so they are all increased also, and from the same causes'.<sup>17</sup> Rocque, who began his career as a *dessinateur de jardin*, chronicled the increasing suburbanization of previously agricultural land through his precisely delineated mapping of the large gardens, open spaces and land use of the London environs.<sup>18</sup> When one considers the development of the villa in this suburban context it becomes no longer either solely an eighteenth-century phenomenon, nor exclusively linked to the Anglo-Palladian movement, but rather part of a pronounced socio-economic trend. The development of suburbs where both the elite and the middling sort clustered in residential enclaves of up-market housing was one of the most characteristic aspects of London's growth in the period, as the prosperous classes abandoned the old City. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries there was considerable expansion of suburban settlements. This took place for a variety of reasons and in a variety of locations but was usually,

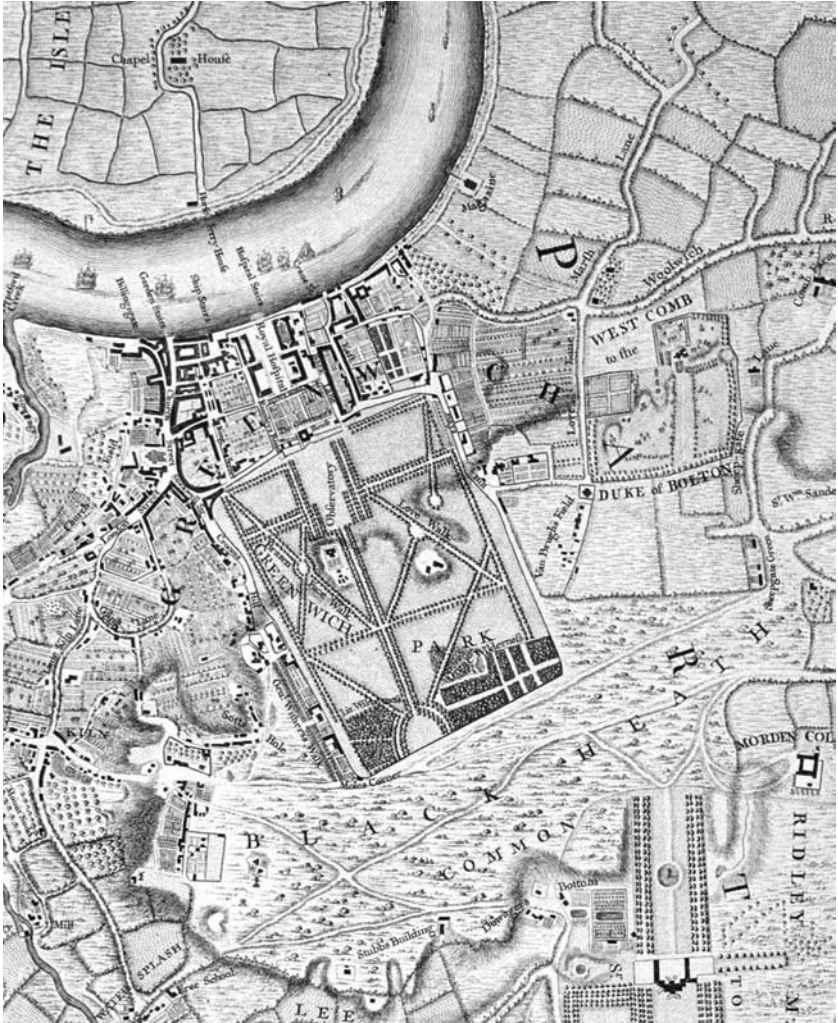
although not always, in outer areas centred around existing village nuclei.<sup>19</sup> John Archer argues powerfully for a symbiotic link between the villa and the suburb in his book *Architecture and Suburbia: From English Villa to American Dream House, 1690–2000*. He sees the genesis of the suburban dream house – the villa – as lying in late seventeenth-century London, most specifically with the south-west riverside developments of Richmond and Twickenham. This is the area which has received most attention to date on account of its pioneering architectural and landscape exemplars, particularly at Chiswick and Marble Hill.<sup>20</sup> However, these Thameside suburbs were but some, and certainly not the first, of a number of outer London villages which were being transformed into suburbs from the seventeenth century onwards. Other riverine settlements in the west such as Brentford and Hammersmith also expanded at this time. On the whole the land to the south of the Thames was not developed until later in the eighteenth century, due to a lack of a good communications network in the form of roads and bridges. To the north villages such as Islington, Highgate and Hampstead grew substantially as outer-London settlements.<sup>21</sup> While to the east places such as Stepney/Mile End and Hackney mushroomed. The latter was described by Defoe as an independent town ‘containing no less than 12 hamlets . . . and remarkable for the retreat of wealthy citizens, that there is at this time near a hundred coaches kept in it’.<sup>22</sup> This chapter will explore these issues of suburbanization, the interplay of polite and vernacular architecture and local landscapes in relation to another suburb, one situated to the south-east of the centre, namely Greenwich.

The town of Greenwich formed part of the commercial Thameside settlement which ran from the City down through the naval dockyards at Deptford and Woolwich and along to the river’s mouth at Gravesend and Chatham.<sup>23</sup> It became a royal centre in the fifteenth century and a palace, called Placentia, was built by the Tudors. The palace was sited beside the river and behind, on the slopes of Greenwich Hill, a royal park was created (Figure 4.1).<sup>24</sup> Due to the presence of the royal household, Greenwich became a site for villas from the sixteenth century onwards. At this time a number of large houses such as Wicklemarsh House, on Blackheath, and Copped Hall and Swanne House, both adjacent to the palace, were erected. Charlton House of c.1607–12 is the best survivor in the area of this phase of large-scale Tudor and Jacobean courtier building.<sup>25</sup> Generally the larger houses were either subsequently remodelled or subdivided into smaller units, as happened at Swanne House which was split up into ten tenements by 1699.<sup>26</sup> Some medium-sized houses do survive, such as The Grange at 52 Croom’s Hill, although the Tudor core is now concealed by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century work (Figure 4.2).

Greenwich remained, to some extent, a royalist centre through the 1640s and 1650s with significant numbers of the ex-royal household based there during the Interregnum, including court musicians such as the Laniers.<sup>27</sup> However, after the Restoration royal links actually declined. Charles II’s grand plans to rebuild the royal palace in 1664 resulted in only one range and in 1694 Queen Mary granted the palace to be adapted for a newly founded naval hospital.<sup>28</sup> The late Stuart Court was increasingly identified with the inner Westminster suburbs, to the west and south west, where the newer major royal palaces were situated. These suburbs grew accordingly, a trend that intensified under the Hanoverians in the following century.

## 4.1

Greenwich and Blackheath on John Rocque's *An Exact Survey of the City's of London and Westminster . . . and the Country near Ten Miles Round*, 1746.



Greenwich also grew. The building and servicing of the hospital was accompanied by a substantial increase in the population of Greenwich, which had already risen from about 2,600 in 1664 to 4,600 in 1676. It then increased from about 6,000 to 14,000 during the eighteenth century.<sup>29</sup> With the departure of the Court the character of the area changed to an unusual mixture of industrial, naval and riverine activity combined with genteel suburban retreat. Defoe characterized it as 'a collection of gentlemen rather than citizens' and as the particular haunt of retired military officers.<sup>30</sup> Others, such as Ned Ward, focused on its less salubrious aspects:

[I] took Notice of several good Houses . . . which look'd like Habitations fit for Christians to live in; but in some parts of the Town, the Huts were no bigger than *Indian Wigwams*, scarce big enough for a *Cuckold* and





4.2  
The Grange,  
52 Croom's Hill,  
Greenwich.  
Photographed in  
1996.

his Wife, to lye at length, without putting their Head or their Heels in the Chimney Corner.<sup>31</sup>

The attractions of the area for the well-to-do were neatly summarized by Edward Hasted in his *Survey of the County of Kent*:

The dryness and salubrity of the soil and air, the conveniency of the park, the general pleasantness of the adjoining country, and its near neighbourhood to the metropolis, contribute to make it a most desirable residence for people of fashion and fortune.<sup>32</sup>

The early Stuarts had been keen to modernize the Tudor palace, one result being the building of the Queen's House in the early seventeenth century. The Anglo-Palladian villa type is generally seen as having been established by Inigo Jones at this time in a number of designs for royal dwellings, principally the Prince's Lodgings in Newmarket of 1618, and the Queen's House at Greenwich.<sup>33</sup> The latter, begun for Queen Anne of Denmark in 1617–19 and completed, after a hiatus in building, for Queen Henrietta Maria in the 1630s, is usually recognized as Britain's first work of pure continental classicism and by extension, therefore, as 'its first truly classical villa'.<sup>34</sup> However, contemporaries viewed it rather differently and in 1617 it was reported that: 'the Queen . . . is building somewhat at Greenwich wch must be finished this sommer, yt is said to be some curious devise of Inigo Jones, and will cost above 4000'.<sup>35</sup> It was built as a small private lodge for the Queen separate from the

main palace. Its precise functioning is still a matter of debate but the evidence suggests that whereas Queen Anne conceived it as combining private and public uses, primarily as a hunting lodge, Henrietta Maria saw it as a purely private retreat for herself and her family.<sup>36</sup> This led to a lack of profile for the villa; it became increasingly off-limits to visitors. Jones's courtly architectural revolution had to depend instead largely on the visibility of the Banqueting House in Whitehall. As John Newman has written: 'The Queen's House was obscurely situated between the garden and the deer-park . . . of an out-of-London palace' and was often ignored even by those who commented on the rest of the complex.<sup>37</sup>

The unusual H-shaped plan of the Queen's villa is the result, as is well known, of its crossing of the existing roadway running at the foot of Greenwich Park. Gordon Higgott has drawn attention to another feature which also derives from its context, but which has been little discussed, that is its unusual flat-roofed design which precluded the use of a classical pedimented temple-front.<sup>38</sup> This arose from the use of the building as a viewing platform. The incorporation of viewing points from which to survey Greenwich's dramatic scenery became a characteristic of architecture in the area and can be traced back to Humphrey Duke of Gloucester's Tower, a late medieval mini-castle sited for panoramic effect at the top of Greenwich Park, where the Old Royal Observatory now stands.<sup>39</sup> There was a particular impetus for royalty, in particular, to look downstream as Greenwich had become a welcoming point for foreign ambassadors. As Higgott argues, in Jones's initial designs the 'look-out function' was centred on the north and south porticoes but was transferred to the roof of the north range in the redesign of the 1630s. Two octagonal turrets were planned, of which only one was built, to provide access to the roof in a similar fashion to Tudor and Jacobean practice, as at Charlton House, also on a hilltop.<sup>40</sup> The building work of 1632–8 also included a terrace, with curving staircase and two iron balconies (which do not survive), on the north side, giving views over the re-landscaped gardens, while a first-floor loggia was incorporated on the south side, looking out over the park.<sup>41</sup>

The early to mid-seventeenth century saw a parallel wave of elite building in Greenwich. However, this owed nothing to the neo-Palladian style of the Queen's House. The adoption of Jonesian classicism was limited to the courtly elite and even then was by no means the preferred choice of all the nobility for their building schemes.<sup>42</sup> Instead, London became ringed during the 1630s by a series of substantial homes of the brick classical-vernacular type, associated by Summerson with the City, although it could equally be identified with the suburbs.<sup>43</sup> Well-known surviving examples, built for an increasingly wealthy and assertive mercantile elite, include: the 'Dutch House' at Kew, 1631, for Samuel Fortrey, a City merchant; Swakeleys, Ickenham, Middlesex, 1638 for Edmund Wright, another merchant and subsequently Lord Mayor of London; Forty Hall, Enfield, Middlesex, 1629–32, for Nicholas Rainton a haberdasher and also a Lord Mayor; and Cromwell House, Highgate, 1637–8, for Richard Sprignell, a militia captain.<sup>44</sup> Nicholas Cooper has identified the salient characteristics of such houses as: compactness and regularity; a plan two or three ranges deep; few external projections; an entrance at the centre of the principal front; and a hall and staircase used purely for circulation rather than for entertaining.<sup>45</sup> He sees

the model for such houses as being the two-room-deep plan of small City houses, such as those shown on Ralph Treswell's surveys of around 1610.<sup>46</sup> This double-depth plan was then adopted wholesale in the outer suburbs: 'when it first appears in the outer London area the resemblance of such houses to these models is so very close that there can be little doubt of their metropolitan origins'.<sup>47</sup> If Cooper is correct – and he is surely right to stress the similarity of types in the outer and inner metropolitan areas and the possibilities for transference between the two – this would be an interesting example of smaller, less prestigious housing influencing larger housing, a bottom-up or sideways rather than top-down process.<sup>48</sup>

In Greenwich, in contrast to the earlier developments by courtiers, the more moderately sized seventeenth-century houses were largely built by City or professional people seeking a second home outside the centre. The most significant ribbon of development was along a road called Croom's Hill which ran along the western edge of the park (Figure 4.1). A strip of manorial wasteland left over here after the park was enclosed in 1619 became a prime site for opportunistic building.<sup>49</sup> The development of so-called waste or common land was to be a major factor in the development of the London fringes. It demonstrates that the potential for buying or claiming land that such intermediate areas offered was greater than that of either the City or countryside proper. A survey of the area carried out for the Crown in 1695–7 by Samuel Travers makes evident that 'the waste' was the major focus for new development.<sup>50</sup> The land was used for a wide variety of functions including limekilns, gardens and stables as well as cottages, houses and tenements.<sup>51</sup> Encroachments seem to have been largely tolerated by the Crown, who owned the land, for the revenue in fines that they generated. Sir William Hooker, for example, is listed in the 1697 survey as owning not just his own capital messuage on Croom's Hill with its gardens, stables and outbuildings, but also three other houses and gardens in Croom's Hill.<sup>52</sup> It was recorded of one of these 'brick tenements' that: 'The profits thereof being applied to the Benefit of the poor as is alledged'.<sup>53</sup> Building a proportion of the development for charity was a common mechanism in attempting the development of wasteland. Hooker also erected an elegant gazebo in his own garden at The Grange (Figure 4.2) in 1672, sited to take advantage of views over the park.

The early brick houses mixed a strong sense of classical regularity and symmetry with the characteristics of existing traditional housing types. A good example can be seen at 66 Croom's Hill. This house, now known as Heathgate House (Figure 4.3), was built sometime after 1634 by Dr Robert Mason.<sup>54</sup> It is of brick with pedimented gable dormers in a tabernacle-style arrangement, but the design maintains the lower broader proportions of post-medieval housing and a single- rather than a double-pile plan. Similar brick boxes of decreasing ornamentality and increasing regularity continued to be erected throughout the seventeenth century. Another important house (now demolished), which more fully meets Cooper's criteria, was the home of Robert Osboldston, a member of the London Bridge Company; it was built in 1638, with a cupola. Samuel Pepys, who moved out to Greenwich during the plague of 1665, described it as: 'a very pretty house and a fine turret at top, with winding stairs, and the finest prospect I know about all Greenwich, save the top of the hill'.<sup>55</sup> A surviving example in Croom's Hill of the symmetrical suburban

4.3  
Heathgate  
House, 66  
Croom's Hill.  
Note the  
casement  
windows that  
survive and  
the pilasters  
that form a  
decorative band  
on the first floor.  
Photographed in  
1996.



double-pile house is The Manor House built for Rear Admiral Sir Robert Robinson, Lieutenant Governor of Greenwich Hospital, in about 1695 (Figure 4.4).<sup>56</sup> As a result of this wave of villa development, twenty years later Defoe singled out 'Crum-Hill' as evidence that 'the town begins to out-swell its bounds'.<sup>57</sup>

As the area expanded a large number of topographical artists were drawn to Greenwich's scenic charms. The earliest prospects of the area date from the sixteenth century, but they increase substantially in numbers from the seventeenth century.<sup>58</sup> The majority of depictions celebrated the panoramic views from Greenwich Hill or Greenwich's riverine scenery, as can be seen in the Bucks' 'Prospect' of 1739 (Figure 4.5). However, suburban growth is also evident here in the prominence given to the villas on the skyline. Such representations form part of a more widespread idealization of London's environs which intensified in the early to mid-eighteenth century, and is evident in collections such as J.-B. C. Chatelain's *Fifty small original and elegant views of The most splendid Churches, Villages, Rural Prospects and Masterly Pieces of Architecture adjacent to London* of 1750.<sup>59</sup> Greenwich was not included in this work, despite an emphasis on Thames-side villages among the examples, perhaps because of its pre-existing visual familiarity. The view from Shooter's Hill (the highest point behind Greenwich) was used, however, by Robert Morris in his attempts to present the metropolitan environs as a site for a new definition of landscape and national self-imagery.<sup>60</sup> In his *Essay upon Harmony, as it relates chiefly to situation and building* of 1739 he cited three London landscapes as epitomizing his theme, Greenwich, Richmond and Windsor. The multi-faceted



4.4  
The Manor  
House, Croom's  
Hill, 1695. The  
house is of plum  
brick with rubbed  
dressings.  
Photographed in  
1996.

view from Greenwich, for Morris, encapsulated the nation in all its various aspects – governmental, commercial, and agricultural – through a single rotating viewpoint:

As we can claim a Share of equal Propriety and Graces, in several Villa's and Seats in our own Country: It were needless to trace foreign Climates for Example . . . Prospects of Extent have various Excellencies, which differently affect us; Shooters Hill, beyond Black Heath, has the noble, grand, and magnificent, the populous, and busy Prospect: The Images are moving, or great, the River Northward, with so many Vessels of Magnitude, which almost every Tide displays; the great City, and Town and Buildings, Westward; The Vale of Essex and contiguous country have all a Sameness of Grandeur, the ideas impressed on us are great and singular: Trade, Commerce, Government, Show, and external pomp

4.5  
Samuel and  
Nathaniel Buck,  
*The North-West  
Prospect of  
Greenwich*,  
1739. The Royal  
Observatory  
sits at the  
highest point of  
Greenwich Park  
with the villas  
of Blackheath  
stretching  
away along the  
ridge of the hill  
westwards.



possess the Imagination: Till we turn Eastward, which has a kind of blended Pleasure mingled with its Magnificence; a Nobleness mix'd with Solitude; and to the South something more *rural* and entertaining.<sup>61</sup>

The Greenwich prospect for Morris might constitute a symbol of national harmony but on the ground the cut and thrust of development proceeded along more contentious lines. Another wave of building took place in the 1670s, after the Restoration. Many of these post-Restoration developments consisted of illegal buildings on the waste. Andrew Snape, Serjeant Farrier to the King, was summoned to the Manor Court in 1675 to pay compensation for illegal building at the top of Croom's Hill.<sup>62</sup> He subsequently negotiated for a Crown lease of the land, which was granted in 1688.<sup>63</sup> 'Snapes House and Gardens' along the park wall are shown on a royal survey of 1693 which indicate one house and two outbuildings, probably stables.<sup>64</sup> The land was divided into plots and an additional six new houses were put up between 1690 and the 1720s, of which three survive.<sup>65</sup> The best-known today is Chesterfield House, now known as the Ranger's House. It was originally built for Admiral Sir Francis Hosier, a professional seaman and son of a local storekeeper, in about 1723, possibly to designs by John James.<sup>66</sup> It was subsequently occupied by the 4th Earl of Chesterfield who extended the house in 1749–51, probably to the designs of Isaac Ware.<sup>67</sup> The two others, Macartney House<sup>68</sup> (Figure 4.6) and Montague House,<sup>69</sup> were also substantially altered during the course of the eighteenth century; the latter was demolished by the Prince Regent in 1815 after it had been the scene of the alleged improprieties that caused the scandal which resulted in his wife Princess Caroline's exile abroad. A further three villas, the White House, Hillside and Park Hall (Figure 4.7), were built a little further down the hill during the early eighteenth century, again on land originally illegally developed from the 1670s. Two of these houses, Hillside and Park Hall, were built by the architect John James, who acquired the land in 1716 and subsequently bought a lease from the Crown in 1722/3.<sup>70</sup> James was Clerk of Works at Greenwich Hospital from 1718 to 1746 and may have intended one of the houses

4.6  
Macartney  
House,  
Chesterfield  
Walk, late  
seventeenth/  
early eighteenth  
century;  
extended in 1802,  
John Soane,  
architect, with  
further additions  
around 1886.  
Photographed in  
1996.





4.7  
Park Hall, Croom's  
Hill, c.1716–24, John  
James, architect,  
with additional  
wing of 1799.  
Photographed in  
1996.

for his own occupation. In the end he lived elsewhere in the area but he kept the estate in the family, presumably as an investment. A survey of 1799 described Hillside (which was later hugely extended) as a 'cottage' and Park Hall as a 'house'. This mixture of building types within close proximity to each other is typical of outer suburban development. Besides its villas, Croom's Hill also contained a terrace (Nos 6–12) of 1721 and a number of semi-detached or contiguous houses, which are discussed below. *The Buildings of England*, commenting on the architectural diversity of Croom's Hill, states: 'There are not many streets near London which give so good and so sustained an idea of the well-to-do private house from the C17 to the early C19'.<sup>71</sup>

On the other side of the park, as can be seen from Rocque's map (Figure 4.1), building was also taking place from the late seventeenth century onwards along Maze Hill, some of which still survives.<sup>72</sup> The most notable development was Vanbrugh Fields, the creation of Sir John Vanbrugh, Surveyor to Greenwich Hospital from 1716 until his death in 1726. The development of the hospital created a substantial work centre in its own right which led other designers and builders employed there, such as Sir James Thornhill, John James and Edward Strong junior, to settle in the area. In the 1720s these three were all members of the Greenwich Lodge which met at the Swan Tavern in East Street, presided over by Thornhill as Master.<sup>73</sup> Vanbrugh owned a town house, Goose-Pie House in Whitehall Yard, which he had built in 1700 on a lease from the Crown. He also built himself a country house at Esher, Surrey, in 1709, which he sold to the Duke of Newcastle in 1714.<sup>74</sup>

From 1717–20, following his appointment to the Surveyorship, he rented a house in Greenwich with his brother Charles and in 1718 he acquired twelve acres of enclosed land on the top of Greenwich Hill, which had once formed part of Blackheath.<sup>75</sup> The development he created here was built by Richard Billinghamurst, a bricklayer who was also employed at the Hospital.

Vanbrugh's residence in Greenwich illustrates how professional men with commitments in town might have used their suburban villas. He had recently married, in 1719, and the area became the base for his young family, suggesting a link between the suburban and the domestic which was to become commonplace in due course. According to Kerry Downes, the appeal of Greenwich to Vanbrugh, besides its social and scenic attractions, would have lain in its excellent communication links. Greenwich was situated on the main London–Dover road, an important consideration for a busy architect whose work took him all over the country. The week was generally spent at Whitehall and the weekends at Greenwich, although it is not clear from his letters whether his wife and/or children accompanied him to town on a regular basis as well. It seems unlikely that the children did so, at least when small; his younger son John died, just after his first birthday, at Walton-on-Thames where he had been sent to be nursed.<sup>76</sup> Periodically Vanbrugh refers to moving to Whitehall or Greenwich 'for good'. This did not mean permanently but for a period of several weeks or a season.<sup>77</sup> Greenwich is clearly differentiated from the 'towne' and Vanbrugh relished the change in tempo that it offered. He wrote to the Duke of Newcastle in 1717: 'I am just going for a day or two's breath to Greenwich which I stand cruelly in need of'.<sup>78</sup> Greenwich also provided a convenient excuse for not meeting with clients when it suited him. In May 1718 he wrote to Newcastle: 'I am flead . . . with blisters so shall not be able to come to Towne till the beginning of the week'; he was still using the same excuse of his blisters in September that year as a reason for non-attendance.<sup>79</sup> In 1719 he wrote theatrically to Newcastle on hearing that the duke had called at Greenwich in his absence: 'I hear your Grace was pleas'd to Storm my Castle yesterday'.<sup>80</sup>

Vanbrugh Castle, 1717–26, can in no way be taken as typical of villa architecture in the period, but in terms of its ethos it wonderfully exemplifies the vernacular-classical hybridity of suburban housing (Figure 4.8). It was, in fact, London's first Gothic suburban villa – a forerunner of Strawberry Hill, its military name obscuring its essential villa-type functions.<sup>81</sup> The Castle on Maze Hill's purpose as a setting for bourgeois domesticity also makes it a more typical suburban residence than Walpole's bachelor pad. The mock-castle form of Vanbrugh's house is famously asymmetrical, although it should be noted that it was originally symmetrical. As with so many suburban residences, it was the expectations of a growing family that led to its asymmetry, through a doubling in size. This also illustrates a pattern of adaptation to changing circumstances that was widespread in the suburbs, where larger plot sizes made the use of extensions a viable alternative to relocation. The grounds were planned as an irregularly picturesque composition with a winding path running through an informal landscape culminating in bastions and a crenellated curtain wall – a Castle Howard in miniature. The falling triangular site encompassed the dramatic views that Morris had celebrated, both west towards the City and east to the Thames





4.8

Vanbrugh Castle,  
1717–26, Sir John  
Vanbrugh, architect,  
entrance front.  
Photographed in  
2008.

estuary and Essex (Figure 4.9). Vanbrugh Castle sat at the apex of the site complete with leaded flats, as at the Queen's House, from which to survey the prospect.

The Castle has been much discussed in architectural history. What has been far less remarked on is the significance of the fact that it formed but the centre-piece of a larger development of four other houses and outbuildings which Vanbrugh built for his relatives on the twelve-acre site.<sup>82</sup> On Rocque's map Vanbrugh Castle and its surrounding buildings sit opposite the word 'Hill' of Maze Hill (Figure 4.1). The buildings to the right of the words 'Van Brugh's Field' are the additional houses, with the largest, Vanbrugh House, to the north, and the gateway at the other end of the land furthest south.<sup>83</sup> None of these buildings survive but they were described in 1799 as, 'some buildings of a peculiar taste, for they are designed to resemble a fortification, with towers, battlements, and other military appearance'.<sup>84</sup> The most substantial was a mini-castle Vanbrugh (or Mince Pie) House, occupied by the architect's brother, Charles. While to the south of these lay a remarkable grouping consisting of a large castellated bungalow for his other brother Philip, named The Nunnery. This single-storey building was flanked by the 'White Towers', two four-storey edifices erected for his sons, which Vanbrugh left to his sisters at his death. The entrance to the development was marked by a gateway, containing two further small houses, while Vanbrugh Castle had its own separate gateway and surrounding wall (Figure 4.9). Vaughan Hart has published some interesting computer reconstructions of the site which dramatically illustrate the play of levels between



## 4.9

John Charnock,  
*View of  
Vanbrugh Castle*,  
c.1800. A view  
from Greenwich  
Park showing  
the landscaping  
around the  
house and its  
positioning in  
relation to the  
Thames.

the buildings and across the slope of the land. Laurence Whistler called his chapter on Vanbrugh Fields 'The Adelphi on Greenwich Hill', after the Adam brothers' later Thameside speculative venture. In a single scheme Vanbrugh anticipated many of the features which were to become hallmarks of later suburban development: the gated and branded estate – 'Vanbrugh Fields' as it was known; the incorporation of a range of scales and housing types all given individualized names; the use of picturesque design features; the creation of the suburban estate as a site for the domestic and the familial; the placement of housing in landscaped grounds; and the siting of the development so as to exploit local topographical features and transport communications. The only way in which it was atypical was that it was not built as a speculative development. Rather than being compared with the inner-city Adelphi, Vanbrugh Fields might be more properly considered as the prototypical suburban gated 'community'.

Vanbrugh's interest in the scenography of architecture and the dramatic possibilities of grouped rather than individual housing is reflected in later developments in the Greenwich area. Architectural historians, following John Summerson in his essay 'The Beginnings of the Early Victorian Suburb', have been keen to use the semi-detached house as one of the defining markers of the suburb.<sup>85</sup> The abandonment of uniform terrace housing was certainly one of the features that distinguished the outer suburbs from the inner ones, although this was less true of cheaper suburban development. It also became less true as the eighteenth century progressed and the line between inner and outer suburbs inexorably blurred. In actuality there was a much broader and more creative range of approaches to the issue of attachment and detachment than architectural historians have allowed. The early suburbs were characterized by a pattern of diversity and adaptation which is rarely taken account of in a subject primarily oriented towards the designed and the new, at the expense of the refurbished, the re-arranged and the appropriated.<sup>86</sup>

On the one hand, in the dichotomy between the individual and the group, one can easily find examples of houses in Greenwich situated in rows but which

self-consciously present themselves to the street as distinct entities. Two examples from the mid-eighteenth century will suffice: 24 Croom's Hill, a terraced house with a double-fronted bowed façade and Venetian window, and 30 Dartmouth Row, with its dramatic and strongly delineated central bay (Figure 4.10). Dartmouth Row formed part of the Dartmouth estate developed as an encroachment on the west side of Blackheath from the 1690s (Figure 4.1).<sup>87</sup> Others became semi-detached by default as later buildings or developments were added to them or when single houses were later subdivided. Nos 16–18 Croom's Hill, for example, were originally built as a single house in the late seventeenth century. In the eighteenth century it became enveloped by development on both sides and it was later subdivided at some point. No. 14 was then built next door, leaving a small gap on one side while it abutted the end of a terrace on the other. The end result was a building line that was variegated both in height and depth. Clearly, suburbanites were happy to occupy houses resulting from this mix-and-match approach to architecture which was the outcome of small irregular plots and an essentially ad hoc development process.<sup>88</sup> John Gwynn in his *London and Westminster Improved* of 1766 deplored such practices and their outcomes. He wrote that:

the houses built in country places should always be detached, for the benefit of air, light and prospect, and not built in rows according to the present taste, nor should they be suffered to project one before another; if this method was observed, every house would be situated in a garden, and the whole would be cheerful and pleasant.<sup>89</sup>

In the second half of the eighteenth century Gwynn's concerns began to be more widely shared and a desire to maintain an air of spaciousness is more evident.



4.10  
30 Dartmouth Row, Blackheath, pre-1753. The projecting wing to the right was part of the original building while the houses to the left are probably late seventeenth century. Photographed in 2009.

This is reflected in the increasing numbers of semi-detached houses which were introduced, particularly around the fringes of Blackheath, where they were highly visible (Figure 4.5).

Blackheath, due to its more isolated position and distance from the river, had remained less developed, with the exception of great houses such as the Tudor Wricklemarsh.<sup>90</sup> This was acquired in 1669 by Sir John Morden, a merchant, who built Morden College, almshouses in its grounds for distressed pensioners of the East India Company. Wricklemarsh was later to be transformed in 1723 into the grandest of all John James's houses in the area, a mansion on the scale of Wanstead, for Sir Gregory Page (Figure 4.1). Around the heath, two of the earliest semi-detached villas are Sherwood and Lydia Houses in Dartmouth Grove of 1776, attributed to Thomas Gayfer senior (Figure 4.11). As Blackheath began to be developed from the late eighteenth century onwards, linked paired houses became a prominent feature in the area. The best-known example is the Paragon of 1794–1807 by Michael Searles, where semi-detached houses were joined together by Tuscan colonnades in a crescent formation. Its design was pre-figured in Searle's earlier development just off Croom's Hill, Gloucester Circus of c.1791 (Figure 4.12). The use of the semi-detached villa was partly due to the greater involvement of architects in the planning of new estates, but also to an increased interest in the siting of villas and an awareness of the impact of vista, following the lead of Vanbrugh Castle.<sup>91</sup> This is not evident for the most part in the Croom's Hill villas. They sit away from the road and adopt a variety of angles to it, and while some are sited to take advantage of the views over the park or the heath, this is by no means true of all the early villas. The Blackheath villas by contrast are designed to both see and be seen, often from a distance. This results in both a very high building line overall and a concern with silhouette and impact which is evident all around the heath. At Grote's Buildings of 1771–4, which were erected on the heath for Morden College

**4.11**  
Sherwood and  
Lydia Houses,  
Dartmouth  
Grove, 1776,  
Thomas Gayfer  
senior, architect.  
Photographed in  
2009.





4.12  
Gloucester Circus,  
c.1791, Michael  
Searles, architect.  
Photographed in  
2008.

as a speculative development by Andrew Grote, a City merchant, three houses are brought together in a single composition dominated by the towering proportions of the central block (Figure 4.13).<sup>92</sup> The later 6 Eliot Place was built as an individual house within a speculative development of terraces by the builder Alexander Doull. Its elevated position was exploited by the astronomer Stephen Groombridge



4.13  
Grote's Buildings,  
Blackheath,  
1771–4, Andrew  
Grote, developer.  
Photographed in  
2009.

who occupied the house from 1802 and added a private observatory on one side (Figure 4.14).<sup>93</sup>

In looking at a range of villas within a particular locale across two centuries, a number of themes emerge. These issues are not evident when the conception of the villa is limited to one particular stylistic type. First, one might say that the notion and purpose of the suburban villa as an out-of-town retreat was well established among the aristocracy by the early seventeenth century. During the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries suburban villas became available to a much wider section of society, in line with the growing prosperity and diversity of the metropolitan middle classes, the wealthiest of whom were no longer tied to their places of employment. Second, as the dramatic contrast between the Queen's House and subsequent villas demonstrates, the widespread adoption of the villa-type was not a top-down emulative process in terms of style or form. Instead, the compact suburban villa drew on a range of sources. These included Cooper's City houses perhaps, in terms of plan, but more broadly, in terms of style, the villa developed from the great diversity of housing types to be found in the metropolitan region. This was an evolutionary process of design development rather than a precedent paper-based approach, a polite-vernacular interchange which typified outer-city housing until at least the final third of the eighteenth century. If we dissociate the villa from its Wittkowan – and essentially modernist – construct as an idealized abstract form, a very different picture of the eighteenth-century British villa emerges.<sup>94</sup> When issues such as local topography and individual usage are taken into account even two houses as stylistically diverse as the Queen's House and Vanbrugh Castle can be seen to have some commonality in terms of their function – as sites of domestic retreat and family life – and their design, with regard to the prominence given to sight and vista. Villas when considered in a local and historical context, far from being an idealized form, can be considered as a widespread but socially distinct dwelling



4.14  
6 Eliot Place,  
Blackheath,  
1796–7.  
Photographed in  
2009.

type within the broader suburban vernacular. We are familiar with the term 'London vernacular' to describe the hybrid townscape which predominated in most of inner London, outside the West End, from the eighteenth century onwards.<sup>95</sup> Perhaps we should add to this term a new one, the 'London suburban vernacular', which encompasses the protean nature of the architecture of the metropolitan environs as well as its significance as the first widespread form of suburban housing.

## Acknowledgement

The author would like to thank Peter Guillery for supplying some of the illustrations and for his help and expertise, which have proved invaluable in improving this chapter.

## Notes

- 1 Nicholas Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry, 1480–1680* (London, 1999), p. 128.
- 2 James S. Ackerman, *The Villa: Form and Ideology of Country Houses* (London, 1990), p. 9.
- 3 *Ibid.*, pp. 32, 63–72.
- 4 ed. Lucy Gent, *Albion's Classicism: The Visual Arts in Britain, 1550–1660* (London, 1995).
- 5 eds Malcom Airs and Geoffrey Tyack, *The Renaissance Villa in Britain 1500–1700* (Reading, 2007); Caroline Knight, *London's Country Houses* (Chichester, 2009).
- 6 The essays were republished in Rudolf Wittkower, *Palladio and English Palladianism* (London, 1974); John Summerson, 'The Classical Country House in Eighteenth-Century England', in *The Unromantic Castle and Other Essays* (London, 1990), pp. 79–120; and John Summerson, *Architecture in Britain, 1530–1830* (Harmondsworth, 1983), chs 20 and 22. The Wittkower/Summerson legacy is examined in: Elizabeth McKellar, 'Populism versus Professionalism: John Summerson and the Twentieth-Century Creation of the "Georgian"', in *Articulating British Classicism: New Approaches to Eighteenth-Century Architecture*, eds Barbara Arciszewska and Elizabeth McKellar (Aldershot, 2004), pp. 35–57.
- 7 Seán O'Reilly, 'Poor Palladian or Not? Some Alternative Sources for the Early Georgian Villa in Ireland'; Michael Davis, 'The Villas of Scotland's Western Seaboard'; and Ian Gow, 'The Edinburgh Villa Revisited: Function not Form', all in *The Georgian Villa*, ed. Dana Arnold (Stroud, 1996), pp. 48–60, 130–43, 144–55 respectively.
- 8 Nicholas Cooper 'The English Villa: Sources, Forms and Functions', in *The Renaissance Villa in Britain*, eds Airs and Tyack, pp. 9–24; John Archer, *The Literature of British Domestic Architecture, 1715–1842* (London, 1985); John Archer, *Architecture and Suburbia: From English Villa to American Dream House, 1690–2000* (London, 2005), ch. 2.
- 9 As quoted in Archer, *The Literature of British Domestic Architecture*, p. 60.
- 10 eds H. M. Colvin and John Newman, *Of Building: Roger North's Writings on Architecture* (Oxford, 1981), p. 62.
- 11 Summerson, 'The Classical Country House', p. 106.
- 12 Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727–1783* (Oxford, 1992); Peter Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in the Provincial Town, 1660–1770* (Oxford, 1989); Peter Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class: Business, Society and Family Life in London, 1660–1730* (London, 1989).
- 13 Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry*, chs 4 and 5; Cooper, 'The English Villa'; Caroline Knight, 'The Environs of London: The Suburban Villa as Rural Retreat', in *The Renaissance Villa in Britain*, eds Airs and Tyack, pp. 127–40.
- 14 Daniel Defoe, *A Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain*, ed. Pat Rogers (London, 1971), p. 177.

- 15 P. J. Corfield, *The Impact of English Towns, 1700–1800* (Oxford, 1982); ed. Peter Borsay, *The Eighteenth Century Town: A Reader in English Urban History, 1668–1820* (London, 1990).
- 16 John Summerson, *Georgian London* (1945), 8th edn (London, 2003); Elizabeth McKellar, *The Birth of Modern London: The Development and Design of the City 1660–1720* (Manchester, 1999).
- 17 Defoe, *Tour*, p. 337.
- 18 Hugh Philips, 'John Rocque's Career', *London Topographical Record*, 20 (1958), pp. 9–25. He was a less reliable guide to small town gardens; see: Todd Longstaffe-Gowan, *The London Town Garden 1740–1840* (London, 2001), pp. 23–5.
- 19 Summerson, *Georgian London*, ch. 20; ed. Andrew Saint, *London Suburbs* (London, 1999), ch. 1.
- 20 See among others: John Harris, *The Palladian Revival: Lord Burlington, His Villa and Garden at Chiswick* (London, 1994); Richard Hewlings, 'Chiswick House and Gardens: Appearance and Meaning', in *Lord Burlington: Architecture, Art and Life*, eds Toby Barnard and Jane Clark (London, 1995), pp. 1–150; Julius Bryant, *Marble Hill House* (London, 1988); David H. Solkin, *Richard Wilson. The Landscape of Reaction*, catalogue of an exhibition at the Tate Gallery, London (1982).
- 21 On Islington and Hampstead, see: Elizabeth McKellar, 'Peripheral Visions: Alternative Aspects and Rural Presences in Mid-Eighteenth-Century London' in *The Metropolis and its Image: Constructing Identities for London, c. 1750–1950*, ed. Dana Arnold (Oxford, 1999), pp. 29–47; ed. Philip Temple, *Survey of London: 46 & 47, Clerkenwell* (London, 2008); F. M. L. Thompson, *Hampstead: Building a Borough, 1650–1964* (London, 1974). On Highgate, see: Elizabeth McKellar, 'The Suburban Villa Tradition in Seventeenth and Eighteenth-century London', in *The Baroque Villa: Suburban and Country Residences, c. 1600–1800*, ed. Barbara Arciszewska (Warsaw, 2009), pp. 197–208.
- 22 Defoe, *Tour*, p. 337.
- 23 See Peter Guillery, *The Small House in Eighteenth-Century London* (London, 2004), ch. 6.
- 24 Information on Greenwich is drawn from: Neil Rhind, *The Heath: A Companion Volume to Blackheath Village and Environs* (London, 2002); Beryl Platts, *A History of Greenwich* (London, 1973); Felix Barker, *Greenwich and Blackheath Past* (London, 1993).
- 25 Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry*, pp. 136–9.
- 26 June Burkitt, 'Greenwich at the end of the 17th Century', *Transactions of the Greenwich and Lewisham Antiquarian Society*, 8/6 (1978), pp. 223–33 (p. 223).
- 27 Platts, *Greenwich*, pp. 171–2.
- 28 John Bold, *Greenwich: An Architectural History of the Royal Hospital for Seamen and the Queen's House* (London, 2000).
- 29 Figures as quoted in Guillery, *The Small House*, p. 194, n. 10.
- 30 Defoe, *Tour*, p. 114.
- 31 Edward (Ned) Ward, *A Frolick to Horn-Fair: With a Walk from Cuckold's-Point thro' Deptford and Greenwich* (London, 1700), p. 15. For the smaller houses of the area see Guillery, *The Small House*, ch. 6.
- 32 Edward Hasted, *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent*, 4 vols (Canterbury, 1797–1801), I, p. 373.
- 33 Summerson, *Architecture in Britain*; John Harris and Gordon Higgott, *Inigo Jones: Complete Architectural Drawings* (London, 1989); ed. H. M. Colvin, *The History of the King's Works*, 4, 1485–1660 (London, 1982).
- 34 Gordon Higgott, 'Inigo Jones's Designs for the Queen's House in 1616', in *The Renaissance Villa*, eds Airs and Tyack, p. 140. For an alternative suggestion of Danvers House, Chelsea, see: Giles Worsley, *Classical Architecture in Britain: The Heroic Age* (London, 1995), p. 4.
- 35 Letter to Sir Dudley Carleton, 1617, as quoted in Summerson, *Architecture in Britain*, p. 121.
- 36 Gordon Higgott, 'The Design and Setting of Inigo Jones's Queen's House, 1616–40', *The Court Historian*, 11/2 (2006), pp. 135–48; Bold, *Greenwich*, pp. 52–5.
- 37 J. Newman, 'Inigo Jones and the Politics of Architecture', in *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England*, eds K. Sharpe and Peter Lake (Stanford, Calif., 1993), pp. 234–45.



- 38 Higgott, 'The Design and Setting of Inigo Jones's Queen's House', p. 138; Higgott, 'Designs for the Queen's House', pp. 146–67.
- 39 Barker, *Greenwich*, p. 15.
- 40 Higgott, 'The Design and Setting of Inigo Jones's Queen's House', p. 141.
- 41 Bold, *Greenwich*, p. 54.
- 42 See John Harris, 'The Courtier or Subordinate Style', in Harris and Higgott, *Inigo Jones*, pp. 298–302. And for a revisionist account, particularly in relation to female patronage: Elizabeth V. Chew, 'A Mockery of the Surveyor's Style?: Alternatives to Inigo Jones in Seventeenth-Century Elite British Architecture', in *Articulating British Classicism*, eds Arciszewska and McKellar, pp. 57–96.
- 43 Summerson, *Architecture in Britain*, ch.10.
- 44 For more on this group see: Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry*, pp. 141–54; Worsley, *Classical Architecture*, ch. 1; Knight, 'The Environs of London'; Lee Prosser and Lucy Worsley, 'Kew Palace', and Elain Harwood, 'Forty Hall and Tyttenhanger', both in *The Renaissance Villa*, eds Airs and Tyack, pp. 180–91, 206–22; Richard Peats, 'Forty Hall, Enfield: Continuity and Innovation in a Carolean Gentry House', *Architectural History*, 51 (2008), pp. 33–62.
- 45 Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry*, p. 141.
- 46 ed. John Schofield, *The London Surveys of Ralph Treswell*, London Topographical Society (London, 1987).
- 47 Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry*, p. 152.
- 48 For further discussion of the themes of emulation between different social groups, see: Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (London, 1925); Nicholas Cooper, 'Display, Status and the Vernacular Tradition', *Vernacular Architecture*, 33 (2002), pp. 182–225; Guillery, *The Small House*, esp. Introduction, chs 1, 2 and 10.
- 49 Beryl Platts, 'The Oldest Road in London? Croom's Hill, Greenwich 1' and 'The Villas on the Waste: Croom's Hill, Greenwich 2', *Country Life* (141), 17 and 24 Nov. 1966, pp. 1262–4, 1378–80. Platts's unexplained use of the term 'villas' for the houses is as noteworthy as its uncritical adoption by the subsequent secondary literature. No source is given but it is possible that it derives from an antiquarian account. It is not from the revised version of Hasted (n. 32) edited by Henry Drake in 1886, the most likely text and one cited by Platts, which incorporated substantial footnotes from the then newly available documents in the Public Record Office. This is an interesting example of the construction of local history and shows how terms or events may continue to resonate in the literature long after the connection with the original source has been severed.
- 50 The National Archives (TNA), MR 1/329.
- 51 TNA, MPE 1/245, pp. 94–102.
- 52 Ibid., pp. 50–1.
- 53 Ibid., p. 95.
- 54 Mason acquired the site from Sir William Smith, Hereditary Sergeant-at-Arms to the King, in 1634 and, as Platts argues, it is most likely that he rather than Smith erected the building. Platts, 'The Oldest Road', p. 1263.
- 55 As quoted in Platts, *Greenwich*, p. 188.
- 56 Bridget Cherry and Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England, London 2: South* (Harmondsworth, 1983), p. 267.
- 57 Defoe, *Tour*, p. 114.
- 58 Many of them are reproduced in Bold, *Greenwich*.
- 59 I discuss Chatelain more fully in McKellar, 'Peripheral Visions', pp. 43–5.
- 60 On topographical viewing in the eighteenth century, see Matthew Craske, 'Richard Jago's *Edge-Hill* Revisited: A Traveller's Prospect of the Health and Disease of a Succession of National Landscapes', in *Pathologies of Travel*, eds R. Wrigley and G. Revill (Amsterdam, 2000), pp. 121–56.
- 61 Robert Morris, *Essay Upon Harmony. As It Relates Chiefly to Situation and Building* (London, 1739), pp. 15–16.
- 62 Platts, 'The Villas on the Waste', pp. 1378–80.

- 63 TNA, CRES 2/1642.
- 64 TNA, MR 1/329 (1).
- 65 Rhind, *The Heath*, pp. 73–4.
- 66 According to unpublished research by Richard Lea of English Heritage.
- 67 Ware was simultaneously building Chesterfield House, London, and the work is attributed on this basis. H. M. Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects, 1600–1840*, 3rd edn (London, 1995).
- 68 J. M. Roberts, 'Macartney House, Blackheath', *Transactions of the Greenwich and Lewisham Antiquarian Society*, 8/4 (1976), pp. 143–8.
- 69 Charles Allister, 'Montague House, Blackheath and "The Delicate Investigation"', *Transactions of the Greenwich and Lewisham Antiquarian Society*, 8/6 (1978), pp. 234–46.
- 70 Frank Kelsall, 'Hillside and Park Hall, Croom's Hill, Greenwich', *Transactions of the Greenwich and Lewisham Antiquarian Society*, 8/6 (1978), pp. 210–23.
- 71 Cherry and Pevsner, *The Buildings of England*, pp. 266–7.
- 72 Nos 47–49 and possibly 111–115 Maze Hill (although Rhind gives the latter as mid-eighteenth century; see *Buildings of England*, p. 273). I am most grateful to Ursula Bowyer for discussion of these houses and other Greenwich matters.
- 73 Information kindly supplied by Melody Mobus. Edward Strong travelled to the Low Countries with Sir James Thornhill in 1711.
- 74 See, Kerry Downes, *Vanbrugh: A Biography* (London, 1977); Laurence Whistler, *The Imagination of Vanbrugh and his Fellow Artists* (London, 1954).
- 75 It was acquired on a 99-year lease from Sir Michael Biddulph, on 3 March 1718. Downes, *Vanbrugh*, 1977, p. 93.
- 76 Vanbrugh had two sons, Charles, b.1720, and John, b.1722–d.1723. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.
- 77 Kerry Downes, *Sir John Vanbrugh: A Biography* (London, 1987), p. 432.
- 78 ed. Geoffrey Webb, *The Complete Works of Sir John Vanbrugh: 4, The Letters* (New York, 1967), p. 94.
- 79 *Ibid.*, pp. 98–9, 102.
- 80 *Ibid.*, p. 119.
- 81 On its relation to Strawberry Hill, see: Michael McCarthy, *The Origins of the Gothic Revival* (London, 1987), pp. 1–2, 88.
- 82 Downes, *Vanbrugh*, 1977, ch. 6; Whistler, *Vanbrugh*, ch. 8. The most recent discussion is by Vaughan Hart in *Sir John Vanbrugh: Storyteller in Stone* (London, 2008), pp. 217–31.
- 83 See Downes, *Vanbrugh*, 1977, p. 95 for a reconstructed plan of the estate.
- 84 T. Fisher, *The Kentish Traveller's Companion: In a Descriptive View of the Villages, Remarkable Buildings and Antiquities, Situated On or Near the Road to London*, 5th edn (Canterbury, 1799).
- 85 John Summerson, 'The Beginnings of the Early Victorian Suburb', *London Topographical Record*, 27 (1995), pp. 1–48.
- 86 For an exception, see Peter Guillery and Michael Snodin, 'Strawberry Hill: Building and Site', *Architectural History*, 38 (1995), pp. 102–28, on the evolution of Strawberry Hill out of the existing house and site.
- 87 Rhind, *The Heath*, pp. 6, 69.
- 88 For a similar process in relation to Hoxton, see Elizabeth McKellar, 'The City and the Country: The Urban Vernacular in Late 17th and Early 18th Century London', in *Georgian Vernacular*, ed. Neil Burton (London, 1995), pp. 10–18.
- 89 John Gwynn, *London and Westminster Improved* (London, 1766), p. 118.
- 90 Information on Blackheath from Rhind, *The Heath*. I am also grateful to Neil Rhind for discussion about the area during a telephone conversation.
- 91 See McKellar, 'The Suburban Villa Tradition'; Peter Leach, 'The House with a View in Late Eighteenth-Century England', *Georgian Group Journal*, 16 (2008), pp. 117–31.

**E. McKellar**

92 Rhind, *The Heath*, p. 69.

93 Cherry and Pevsner, *Buildings of England*, p. 422.

94 Alina Payne, 'Rudolf Wittkower and Architectural Principles in the Age of Modernism', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 53 (1994), pp. 322–42.

95 Guillery, *The Small House*, esp. chs 1, 7, 9 and 10; Lynda Nead, *Victorian Babylon: People, Streets and Images in Nineteenth-Century London* (London, 2000), Part 3.

## Chapter 5

# The York Retreat

'A vernacular of equality'

*Ann-Marie Akehurst*

The York Retreat that was constructed as a purpose-built lunatic asylum by the Quakers between 1794 and 1796 enjoys an international reputation (Figure 5.1). The foundation has been regarded as a ground-breaking psychiatric institution because its therapeutic regime represented a new, humane attitude towards the mentally ill.<sup>1</sup> It has also been noted as perhaps the earliest planned 'therapeutic environment' – it was surrounded by pleasure gardens that were designed for the patients to enjoy.<sup>2</sup> It is argued here that it was significant in a third way – in contributing to a change in Quaker attitudes towards conventional architectural design practice from hostility to enthusiastic reception; for – like its therapy and its gardening – the process of construction, its plan and, to a certain extent even its façade, are expressions of a distinctively Quaker way of proceeding. This is of particular interest with regard to understandings of vernacular architecture because it emerges at the intersection

### 5.1

The York Retreat, designed by William Tuke, John Bevans, Peter Atkinson the Elder and the Religious Society of Friends, 1794, in a view of 1812 by Peter Atkinson the Younger.



between an attitude to design rooted in vernacular tradition, and polite practice and appearance. It is also possible to reveal here the hitherto overlooked contribution of Peter Atkinson the Elder to the design of the Retreat.

### **Quakerism and architecture**

The Quakers, properly the Religious Society of Friends, were a Puritan sect founded by the charismatic George Fox in the late 1640s as a response to the cataclysms of the English Civil War.<sup>3</sup> Quakerism, as Pink Dandelion has written, modelled 'a collective apostolic succession' which neither required the intervention of priests nor did it privilege sacred texts.<sup>4</sup> Quakers rejected an exclusively rational mindset. Sarah Grubb, writing in 1781, characterized the human condition from a Quaker perspective and evoked the notion of the holy fool:

To be stripped of ourselves, to be simple, to be fools in our own eyes, and in the eyes of others, are experiences not pointed to by our own dispositions, but are indisputably the way to that kingdom which flesh and blood cannot inherit.<sup>5</sup>

The Friends were colloquially known as 'Quakers' because of the predilection of some members for transports of religious ecstasy.<sup>6</sup> The French traveller, Pierre-Jean Grosley, witnessed such behaviour. He described one participant at a meeting:

After long blowing his breath on my face, spoke for about half an hour; all his expressions were interrupted by new puffing and blowing, with his eyes shut, and his hands in his sleeves; he had the air and tone of a man that walks in his sleep.<sup>7</sup>

Another Frenchman described them as working 'themselves into a state of giddiness with intense thinking'.<sup>8</sup> Familiarity with altered psychological states such as religious ecstasy created an acceptance among Quakers of madness as an alternative psychological mode.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, the Friends tended to view mental disorder as transient and curable, with the patient restored to their former selves during periods of remission. So the establishment of an asylum can be seen as an extension of the Quaker duty of care to co-religionists who suffered from mental illness.

The Retreat appears to stand in mute criticism of the York Lunatic Asylum, now Bootham Park Hospital (Figure 5.2), designed by John Carr, and built between 1772 and 1777 on the other side of York. In 1788 the York Asylum was criticized in a pamphlet by William Mason, a precentor at York Minster, as a monumental waste of charitable money that he condemned as 'the villa of a nabob'.<sup>10</sup> The founding narrative of the Retreat has it that a Quaker woman, Hannah Mills, perished at the York Asylum without the consolation of her Friends to visit, and the community decided to establish their own institution as an alternative. There is no reference to this in the foundation statement of the Retreat, yet many subsequent accounts of the establishment of the asylum cite Mills's death as the prime cause for its founding.<sup>11</sup> The text of the foundation statement appears in a ledger of the

## 5.2

The York Lunatic Asylum (now Bootham Park Hospital), designed by John Carr, 1772–7. Photographed in 1994.



minutes of the Founding Committee. At the top of the first page, onto which is pasted a printed version of a description of the foundation, is written: 'Hannah Mills Woman Friend from Leeds dies at the Asylum 30th of 4th month, 1790'. Samuel Tuke relates Mills's story in his *Description of the Retreat*, published over twenty years later. The oppositional narrative of a helpless Quaker woman left to perish alone in a hostile York Asylum fitted Tuke's reforming agenda, as will be discussed below. The story may be a later interpolation. The York Retreat, I would suggest, emerged more from a renaissance in the fortunes of Quakerism in York and, in particular, was the product of the dynamism and industry of its founder William Tuke.<sup>12</sup>

Tuke was born into a York Quaker family of grocers. He was the senior personality in the York Society of Friends and its treasurer for twenty-six years; he attended the annual London Yearly Meeting for fifty years consecutively.<sup>13</sup> His obituary outlined the manner of his philanthropic activity:

There will scarcely be found an instance of any useful or benevolent undertaking, within the proper scope of his exertions, which did not partake of his support, not merely in a pecuniary way, if that were needed, but (which is more important) in personal attention . . . William Tuke was a philanthropist of all work. Liberal of his time and labour, wherever these could be brought into use, exemplary in the punctuality of his attendance, and in his adherence to the business in hand, and clear in his conceptions of its nature and bearings, he was on all occasions of this nature an able and a welcome coadjutor . . . he was one of those rare characters who 'are never weary in well doing', and who accomplish it in the most efficient way.<sup>14</sup>

Tuke's benevolence was perhaps a way of offsetting moral scruples regarding the business he had inherited, selling the luxuries of tea, coffee and cocoa, disapproved

of by the Society of Friends. His projects may also be construed as a way of securing his status as the leader of the local Friends' community. What is certain is that the Retreat was the product of William Tuke's hard work.

Quakerism was not doctrinal and it was anti-intellectual. However, its ideas were published, often and widely. The typical literary forms were the journal and the exemplary life, in which models were offered for good conduct. The Quaker position found expression in modes of behaviour where common signs of deference were not observed. In many respects, Quakerism stood in opposition to 'polite' society. This sceptical stance with regard to the world embodied a challenge to the status quo that has been encapsulated by James Walvin:

They [Quakers] refused to bow, to remove their hats to superiors, to acknowledge titles, and they spoke to their betters with the common plain 'thee' and 'thou'. It was a style, a tone, a vernacular of equality which could be interpreted as showing disrespect and disdain.<sup>15</sup>

Other signs of rank were also rejected in favour of an understated costume of dark, unembellished clothing. In the 1780s Joseph Pike railed against 'Height and Finery in Apparel and Household furniture'.<sup>16</sup> Music, painting and literature were all rejected as fundamentally redundant and meretricious. Since luxury and ostentation were anathema, ornament and show in dress and possessions were decried as superfluous. It should be no surprise then that Quakers did not practise architecture that might be regarded as being preoccupied with making a show. Instead, they worked in a vernacular tradition consciously informed by self-effacement and 'right-ordering' – Friends' shorthand for in keeping with Quaker tradition and practice.

Eighteenth-century architectural practice was conducted by a variety of individuals with wide-ranging backgrounds and skills, from aristocratic amateurs and patrons to builder-surveyors and speculators, yet only two Quakers of the time are recorded as architects at the authoritative library at Friends' Meeting House in London. The first, Joseph Avis, was probably the designer of Bevis Marks Synagogue in London, and the second was John Bevans, the builder of the York Retreat.<sup>17</sup> George and William Tully can be added to the Friends' list. These Quaker builders and surveyors designed the Bristol Meeting House in 1747.<sup>18</sup> While there were many Quakers enthusiastically and successfully embracing new areas of enquiry and endeavour such as medicine and science, the community appears, despite its affluence, largely to have resisted the area of architectural design.

Emigration may have reduced the number of English Quaker architects. Joseph Gill, a Quaker minister and builder, went to Ireland.<sup>19</sup> Peter Harrison, of York, trained informally in Yorkshire with William Etty and his son John,<sup>20</sup> enjoyed a spectacular and colourful career across the Atlantic, and settled in America where he was an early and prodigious proponent of the Palladian style.

Ackworth School, in Yorkshire, was established in 1779 by the founder of the York Retreat, William Tuke, together with a fellow Friend, the botanist and Fellow of the Royal Society, John Fothergill.<sup>21</sup> It is a fine Palladian structure, designed by John Watson of Wakefield, and constructed, not for the Society, but for the Foundling

Hospital in London, from whom it was purchased in 1779.<sup>22</sup> Ackworth was the first in a series of Quaker philanthropic public buildings in Yorkshire.<sup>23</sup>

## Meeting houses

However, to say there were few Quaker architects is not to say that Quakers did not design buildings. Walvin's phrase, 'a vernacular of equality', combines two tendencies in Friends' behaviour, and captures their chosen form for the Retreat.<sup>24</sup> This plain egalitarianism was reflected in their places of worship, meeting houses. Quaker building emerged in the context of mid-seventeenth-century strivings for a Puritan plain style. Unlike other Puritans, who adapted existing churches, Quakers rejected the 'steeplehouses' or 'mashouses' as they called them, as idols' temples.<sup>25</sup> Meeting houses were erected from the last quarter of the seventeenth century all over the country and provide an insight into a distinctive approach to construction, which can be seen to be perpetuated at the York Retreat. Dandelion summarizes the importance of the meeting house in the Friends' culture; it was more than just a potent symbol of faith: 'in a world beset by continuing apostasy and spiritual corruption, the home and the meeting house became the twin cloisters of spiritual renewal and purity'.<sup>26</sup>

Frederick B. Tolles has identified a specific Quaker esthetic originating in Quaker theology:

If the typical Puritan disciplined his imagination, if he curbed his esthetic sensibilities, lest he become too much in love with the world, the Quaker . . . stripped his worship life down to the stark simplicity of silent communion with god in a bare meeting-house. It is in this sense that Quakerism can be called anti-esthetic.<sup>27</sup>

Tolles posits that simply because Quaker anti-intellectualism meant there was no interest in articulating an aesthetic theory, that is not to say that a distinctive style did not emerge in practice. Quaker style might be said to contain several elements: a taste for simplicity; a demand for functionalism; and a delight in quality of design, material and execution. The stripping away of superfluity was known as 'plaining', which 'points towards the inward spirituality even whilst its emphasis is the outward reduction of superfluity'.<sup>28</sup>

Hubert Lidbetter, a twentieth-century architect and practising Quaker, has written of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century meeting houses that, 'with no necessity to provide for music or any set form of service a Friends Meeting House is more a domestic than an ecclesiastical building'.<sup>29</sup> This secularization and domesticity is important with regard to the Retreat where the recognizable features of meeting-house construction are the high quality of building (for an enduring structure), the use of local building materials, the use of a vernacular, domestic and, in particular, farmhouse register, the prominence of the kitchen, and Puritan plain style.

Over-specification has resulted in a good many survivals from the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries that have remained largely in their original form. Two examples from the north, both in continuous use, and a reflection of the



durability of Quaker building, illustrate these earliest meeting houses. Brigflatts, near Sedbergh, now in Cumbria, was the first purpose-built meeting house, constructed in 1675; Countersett, high in the Yorkshire Dales, was built in 1710 (Figures 5.3 and 5.4). At Brigflatts the use of local whitewashed sandstone means that the building sits comfortably with its neighbours. The mullioned windows are the originals, and an unusual survival (see below).

The Friends' preference for employing people from within their own community reinforced the tendency to build using local materials and traditional techniques in a functional rather than ornamental way. The meeting houses reflect a design process based in Friends' abilities to describe their simple requirements and local craftsmen's abilities to respond to those undemanding specifications.<sup>30</sup> Lidbetter points to the resemblance that many meeting houses bore to farm buildings – both deploy a vernacular architectural register and are constructed from local building materials which weather in the landscape.<sup>31</sup>

From a distance these meeting houses were indistinguishable from neighbouring cottages and farms, as is illustrated by Barrow Wife at Heights in Cumbria (Figure 5.5). This anonymity was characteristic of the desire to be in society but not of it. In the Lake District, at Colthouse, Hawkshead and Rookhow in the Grizedale Forest, local slate was covered with white render. In Countersett and Bainbridge the Friends used the local sandstone.

In the eighteenth century large windows were often the only distinguishing feature (Figure 5.4), typically, just sufficient detail to signify a difference. At Barrow Wife, Rookhow and Colthouse the only outward adaptations since the late seventeenth century are the large Georgian sash windows which flood the rooms with light (Figure 5.6). In writing of the design of the York Meeting House in the nineteenth century, Quaker William Alexander recommended that 'Atmospheric light



5.3  
Brigflatts Quaker Meeting House, Cumbria, 1675. Vernacular construction in sandstone, render and slate in the first purpose-built Quaker Meeting House.

#### 5.4

Countersett  
Quaker Meeting  
House, North  
Yorkshire, 1710.  
Plain-style  
interior with  
wainscoting,  
benches,  
whitewashed  
walls and large  
sash windows.



should be admitted by a window near the ceiling as its rays dart on the opposite wall and so the window gives a much better effect than by a window nearer the floor'. But the sills were to be kept high to prevent the congregation being distracted by the outside world.<sup>32</sup>

While the meeting-house exteriors reflect local decorum, the interiors are characteristic of Quaker plainness. Contemporary divines stressed the importance

#### 5.5

Barrow Wife  
Quaker Meeting  
House, Cumbria,  
1677 (on the  
left), showing  
its proximity to  
and unity with  
other vernacular  
structures.





5.6  
Colthouse  
Quaker Meeting  
House, Cumbria,  
1688. Slate  
and render  
construction  
with an original  
mullioned  
window over the  
porch, and later  
sash windows  
in the meeting  
room.

of absolute simplicity in household furnishings. Domestic interiors were expected to be plain with bare boards and white walls; fringes, valances and curtains were condemned as 'superfluous'. Joseph Pike insisted on removing such fripperies and replacing them with 'useful, plain woodwork'.<sup>33</sup> When it came to meeting houses, the French traveller Barthélemy Faujas de Saint-Fond observed the same style in 1799:

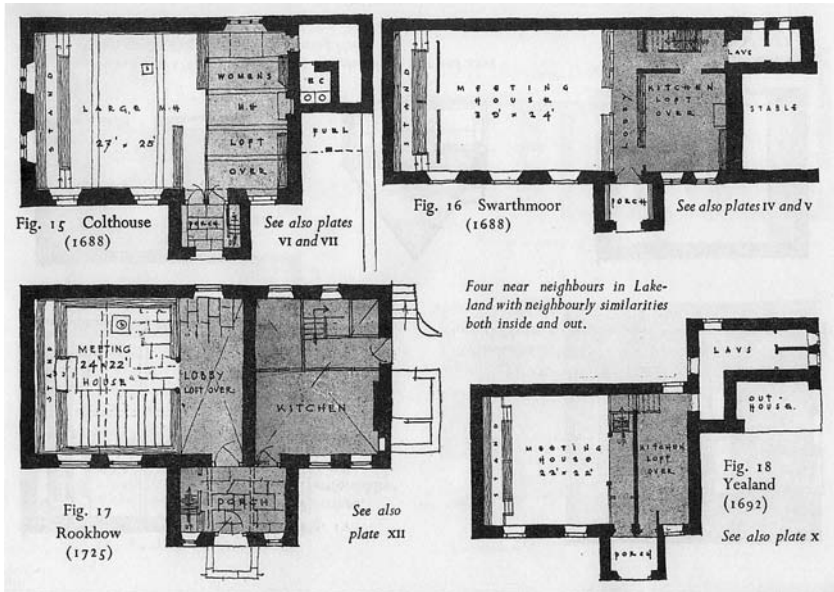
The places where the Quakers assemble for worship, or rather to meditate . . . are calculated to excite respect. This kind of temples [*sic*], like those of the people of antiquity, admits the light at the top of the roof only. The walls are of a dazzling white; the wainscoting, unencumbered with sculpture, shines in the modest lustre of its native colours, and the exquisite cleanliness with which it is kept; the seats are simple benches, placed in parallel rows. In vain would one look here for paintings, statues, altars, priests, and acolythists. All these accessories are considered by the Quakers to be superfluities, devised by human intervention, and as foreign to the Supreme Being.<sup>34</sup>

These early meeting houses in the north have retained their original unadorned interiors – Countersett and Brigflatts still have their dazzling white walls, high fenestration, simple benches and wainscoting – the pared-down interior style that is typical of the Quaker aesthetic, the 'plaining' which Friends required.

While the exteriors echoed the rural buildings around them, and the interiors the Quaker plain aesthetic, it was the plans that most clearly reflected the functional requirements of the structure (Figure 5.7). Meeting-house plans tended to become regularized over time.<sup>35</sup> Typically, a North-country meeting house consisted of a main meeting room, a minor (women's) meeting room and a kitchen. It is worth

## 5.7

Four Lakeland Quaker meeting houses. Plan showing the prominence of kitchens (reprinted by permission from *The Friends Meeting House* by Hubert Lidbetter FRIBA [Sessions of York 1961, 1979, 1995]).



noting the presence of a kitchen, to supply necessary sustenance, especially for those who had travelled long distances across the inhospitable upland terrain.

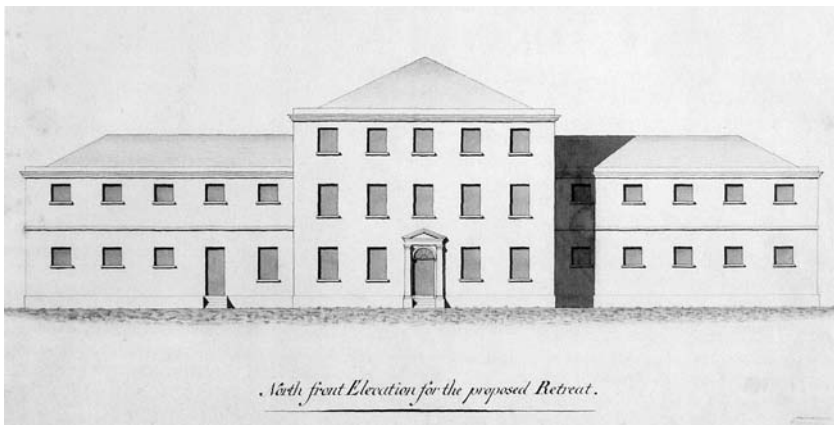
So, to reiterate, salient characteristics of northern meeting houses are durable construction, local materials, a farmhouse register, Puritan plain style and prominent kitchens. This provides a fruitful context for understanding the architectural character of the York Retreat.

## The designing of the York Retreat

A trinity of personalities emerges in considering the design of the Retreat: the founder, William Tuke; Peter Atkinson, a local architect and sometime partner of John Carr; and John Bevans.<sup>36</sup> Bevans was a London Quaker builder who had

## 5.8

The York Retreat, proposed front elevation, Peter Atkinson the Elder, 1794.

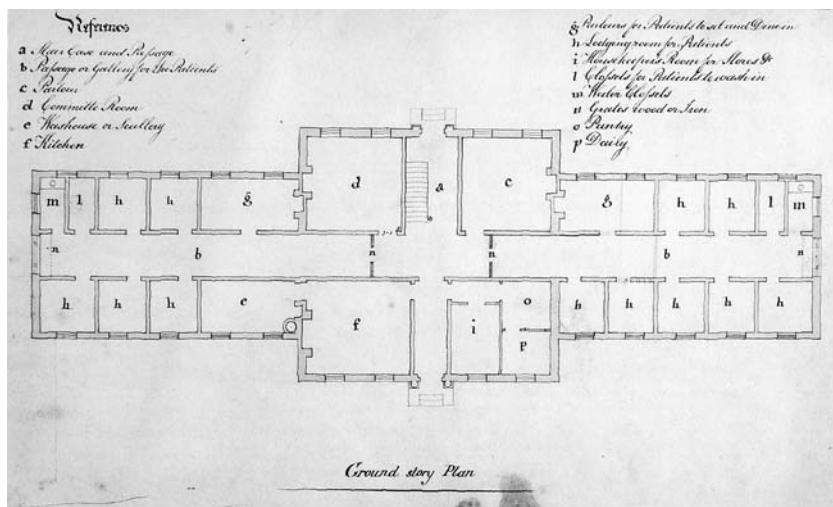


successfully completed the Devonshire House meeting houses but was the first to admit to Tuke that he 'found it [an asylum] quite new, having never before turned my attention to the like'.<sup>37</sup>

The earliest image we have of the York Retreat, Peter Atkinson's prospective elevation of 1794, reveals the asylum's classical proportions (Figure 5.8). Two five-bay, two-storey wings flank the taller central block. The symmetry is interrupted only by the inclusion of a plain doorway on the east side. This doorway is omitted on Atkinson's accompanying ground plan (Figure 5.9), but it seems clear that it was built. A *Perspective View of the North Front of the Retreat near York*, by Peter Atkinson the Younger in 1812, shows doors on both wings, and it is evident in the fabric that these did exist and have since been replaced by windows.

A stringcourse between the ground and first floor is the only ornamentation. The windows in the wings appear to be square, except that to the west of the minor door, shown as the same size as those in the central block. The south elevation is almost identical, the asymmetries removed so that it appears a perfectly regular façade.<sup>38</sup> This bilateral symmetry, tripartite structure and the roofs create the overall impression of an austere Palladian villa, while the virtually astylar walls speak of a utilitarian register that would satisfy rules of classical decorum for a building of this purpose.

In the historiography of the Retreat, Bevans and Tuke have been credited with sharing responsibility for the design, but the role of Atkinson has been overlooked by all but the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, which noted that Atkinson supervised the project.<sup>39</sup> Anne Digby's monograph of the institution details the involvement of Tuke and Bevans, but Atkinson's name does not appear. Digby attributes the earliest plans to William and Henry [sic] Tuke, and refers to the plans of 1794 as having been supplied by 'a builder'.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, Atkinson appears to have been effaced from Quaker historiography. He was a non-Quaker and a practising architect; his involvement in the project might have exposed the



5.9  
The York Retreat,  
proposed  
ground-floor  
plan, Peter  
Atkinson the  
Elder, 1794.

Retreat's patrons to an accusation of ostentatious show. More specifically, he was the principal architectural assistant to John Carr, architect of the controversial York Asylum, and so, perhaps, tainted by association.<sup>41</sup>

Atkinson supplied the plans and elevations found in a booklet dated 1794.<sup>42</sup> This is bound, but also bears pencil addenda, suggesting that it was a presentation volume used by the Quaker community as both an inducement to contribute and a consultative document. Indeed, the Retreat Committee Minutes document the process of consultation:

Agreed: That the Centre and East wing of Jn. Bevans plan be Placed as marked on Ground Plan A and that after the consideration he had whether the kitchen and wash House be on the North side and Patients Parlours on the South – That Peter Atkinson be consulted and if necessary Jn. Bevans be desired to come down.<sup>43</sup>

The respective roles in the design of the Retreat are revealed in the archives. William Tuke was the commissioning patron, who had ideas but was incapable of executing them; his correspondence with Bevans details their discussions regarding planning and appearance. The architect/designer Bevans learnt from best practice and theory in London, but was remote from the project, while Peter Atkinson was available in York to give advice. Atkinson is described as acting professionally predominantly as a measurer. An entry in the Directors' Minute Book for 4 April 1794 records that Atkinson estimated the total cost for the central block and east wing to be £1,883 4s 1d.<sup>44</sup> He proposed 'to undertake the superintendence of it [the construction] for 3½ percent of the cost, including his Plans, Estimate and Measuring of the Work'. It can be deduced that his role was that of executant measurer-surveyor, on hand not just to oversee the project on the ground to completion, but also to fine-tune the design.<sup>45</sup> Atkinson was clearly so capable; he was simultaneously engaged in overseeing the construction of his own design for Hackness Hall, elsewhere in Yorkshire.<sup>46</sup>

Lidbetter identified the 'tardy adoption of the more classical type of architecture' by Quakers, starting with the York Meeting House in 1817.<sup>47</sup> Yet aesthetic considerations of astylar classical detailing were taken into account with the Retreat. Bevans claimed to 'have endeavoured to render it uniform as well as useful', and that he had 'introduced stone Cornice of strings into the Elevation under an idea that stone with you is cheap and also it connects and preserves the Lines of the Front to the Centre and wings'.<sup>48</sup> These subtle classical influences predate the York Meeting House by more than twenty years. The Retreat was among the earliest classical Quaker buildings in England.

Here, at first glance, is a building quite different from upland meeting houses. But this is not just decorous Palladian simplicity. Something more interesting is going on in this Quaker context. Ironically, for a group who rejected so much of the conventional world, the façade of the Retreat is classical because that was the local vernacular for buildings – both public and domestic – in late eighteenth-century York. By the 1790s the classical had become the generally accepted architectural idiom for buildings in the city. The classical townhouses which lined Bootham, Micklegate,

St Saviourgate and Castlegate were complemented by a suite of public buildings.<sup>49</sup> The early eighteenth-century Debtor's Prison and Mansion House were joined by the Assembly Rooms, the County Hospital, the Racestand, the York Asylum, the Assize Courts, the Female Prison and the Bar Convent. Their arrival would have changed awareness as to what was already there, away from the crumbling late-medieval ecclesiastical Gothic and perpendicular, so redolent of the city's Catholic medieval past, towards brick-built classicism. Atkinson's elevation conceals the fact that the Retreat was built in the local building material – brick, like domestic and lower-status buildings – not the ashlar limestone of the grandest public edifices. So the Quaker tradition of contextual vernacular building was respected in the Retreat. The choice of a classical style recognized the Friends' desire to be in society but not of it. The designers of the Retreat created an institution that quietly reflected, in a pared-down manner, contemporary architecture in the city. It prudently, and cost-effectively, avoided showiness and was modestly anonymous. By contrast, Carr's façade for the York Asylum had deployed a Giant Order engaged Tuscan portico (Figure 5.2), a *piano nobile* and Venetian windows on its side elevations. The building was renowned for its quality of finish; inside there were extravagant doorcases for the principal committee rooms.<sup>50</sup> The Retreat's designers deliberately rejected such architectural spectacle, not simply as a matter of cost, but also as self-conscious self-effacement.

### **The Retreat's layout: precedent and collaboration**

In the correspondence regarding the design and construction of the Retreat only two observations relate to the appearance of the asylum;<sup>51</sup> aesthetics were not discussed other than in the comments by Bevans cited above regarding the stringcourse, and in an expressed desire that the asylum should not look like a prison because 'if the outside appears heavy and prison-like it has a considerable effect upon the imagination'.<sup>52</sup> The founders of the Retreat, all members of York Monthly Meeting, were well informed.<sup>53</sup> They consulted best current practice – Tuke and Bevans visited George Dance's new St Luke's in London, and Bevans also knew the writings of the penal reformer John Howard.<sup>54</sup> His sympathetic concern for the welfare of the prisoner resonated with Quaker humanitarian attitudes. The founders probably also knew Jeremy Bentham's *Panopticon; or, The Inspection-House*, published just before the Retreat was founded.<sup>55</sup> Bentham proposed an architectural form, originated by his brother Samuel, which permitted 'the principle of omnipresence' to be extended not merely to the design of prisons, but also to hospitals and mad-houses. Bentham's understanding that surveillance was necessary to the care of the mentally ill resonated with that of Tuke and Howard, but Bentham's ruthless pragmatism in extending the penitentiary model to non-custodial settings, such as manufactories and even schools, was part of a larger philosophy with which the Religious Society of Friends would not have been sympathetic.<sup>56</sup> Quakers were early advocates of prison reform and were opposed to institutional inhumanity. The desire that the Retreat should not look like a prison was underscored by the desire that it should instead adopt a domestic ethos. This was reflected in the naming of the asylum as 'the House' and the residents as 'the Family'. In the foundation instrument it was referred to as 'a retired habitation' and 'Friends Lunatic House' or 'Residence'.<sup>57</sup>

Since Bentham published his *Panopticon* in plan, elevation and section it would have been possible for the founders of the Retreat to have passed these on to the builders should they have wanted such a scheme. The Retreat might therefore be construed as a rejection of Bentham's ideology in favour of a more tempered and humane version of vigilance. In the twentieth century, Michel Foucault condemned the institution as a bourgeois refinement of 'the great Confinement', but this seems contradicted by Tuke's failure to align himself with Bentham.<sup>58</sup>

In 1788 the local radical campaigner, Reverend William Mason, had publicly suggested that in the design of the York Asylum 'convenience and privacy only ought to have been consulted'.<sup>59</sup> The Retreat, which was located in the extramural suburbs of York, combined the convenience of a 'plain' classicism and the privacy of the countryside. In the original proposal, the institution was projected as having 'a few acres for keeping Cows and Garden Ground for the Family, which will afford scope for the patients to take exercise, when that may be prudent and sensible'.<sup>60</sup> This accords with the Friends' idealization of the rural way of life. Many Quakers originated in farming communities, and William Penn, who had founded Pennsylvania as a Christian experiment, had extolled the virtues of country living in *Some Fruits of Solitude*, with aphorisms like: 'The Country Life is to be preferr'd; for there we see the Works of God; but in Cities Little else but the Works of Men: and the one makes a better Subject for our Contemplation than the other'.<sup>61</sup>

In the 1780s John Carr designed a farmhouse for his own estate at Ellenthorpe Hall, near Boroughbridge in Yorkshire (Figure 5.10).<sup>62</sup> Atkinson would have known his colleague's farm, and it may have influenced his conception of the appropriate materials and elevations for the hospital. The designers of the asylum, I would suggest, intended to produce a sequestered vernacular structure that embodied Quaker notions of the spiritual salubrity of the countryside and the work ethic of the farm, so familiar to many Friends. In contrast with the effrontery of the York Asylum, the Retreat's originators designated it 'a retired habitation'; it was this combination of the rural, the domestic and the industrious that is denoted in

**5.10**  
Ellenthorpe Hall,  
North Yorkshire,  
designed by  
John Carr and  
built before 1789.  
Photographed in  
2009.





its appearance.<sup>63</sup> It was interpreted in such terms at the time. In 1798 an early visitor noted that 'This house is situated a mile from York, in the midst of a fertile and cheerful country; it presents not the idea of a prison, but rather a large rural farm. It is surrounded by a garden'.<sup>64</sup> This perception is supported by the plan of the central block, as we shall see.

The Quaker respect for collaboration is best illustrated here with regard to the design of the plan of the Retreat (Figure 5.9). The correspondence makes it clear that Tuke had a direct influence on Bevens's ideas. Tuke had drawn up the initial plans that were sent to Bevens for his consideration. As Tuke wrote in 1794:

Soon after the Subscription was set on foot my thoughts were turned towards the Construction of a Building and I laid out on paper a rough draft of what occurred from which my Son John formed the Plan which accompanies this. . . . I do not send it with a view to limit thee in the least, not desiring thee to adapt any part of it in lieu of anything preferable, and yet I am inclined with freedom to deliver my thoughts for thy Consideration as some hints may perhaps be useful.<sup>65</sup>

Bevens had clearly not visited the site; something that he admitted caused problems. He reasonably observed: 'It's almost impossible to do justice to a Design unless the Designer was upon the spot, where every convenience could be consulted'.<sup>66</sup> However, Tuke's grasp of detail made him both an informative and insistent correspondent.

In a letter to Tuke, Bevens revealed that he had been hitherto ill equipped to perform the task of designing an asylum but that he had taken advice:

Experience has pointed out to those who have had to do with Institutions of this kind, and particularly the Late John Howard whose works I have consulted, and as I have had the advantage of seeing Lukes [St Luke's] which I apprehend is thought the most compleat in this Kingdom, I have endeavoured as far as a small scale will admit to follow them for which I hope thou wilt excuse me, as it will in some measure vary from thy plan which thou sent me at Liberty to do.<sup>67</sup>

Howard was no mere accidental choice: 'His taste in dress, furniture and everything exterior was turned to simplicity and neatness; and this conformity of disposition rendered him an admirer of the sect of Quakers, with many individuals of which he maintained an intimate connexion'.<sup>68</sup>

Clearly Bevens's intention was to follow Howard's recommendations with regard to plan as far as constraints would allow. Howard's survey of European lazarettos was published in 1789,<sup>69</sup> and George Dance's St Luke's Hospital was a mere six years old when Tuke and Bevens visited in 1792; it was the most up-to-date asylum in the country.<sup>70</sup> Its plan, together with the description offered by Howard, confirm that Tuke and Bevens were influenced by their time at St Luke's,<sup>71</sup> which Howard described as 'spacious':

Here are on each of the three floors, three long galleries and wings, with opposite cells for the patients; and in the centre are apartments for officers etc. On one side of these apartments are the men, on the other are the women. In each gallery there are thirty-two cells which are arched, boarded, and wainscoted (ten feet four inches by eight, and thirteen feet three inches high) and each cell has a window outward, and a large aperture over the door, with inside wire lattice to the iron bars, to prevent accidents, and (very properly) no shutters . . . the cells open into galleries fifteen feet wide; and in each gallery was a vault, which was not offensive. There are many cisterns on the top of the house, which are filled by four machines or forcing pumps, to supply galleries with water. . . . Here are very properly two sitting rooms in each gallery, one for the quiet, the other for the turbulent.<sup>72</sup>

Howard's comments were important. He regarded St Luke's as 'neat and clean', and a 'noble hospital'. It would seem then that Howard's preferred plan consisted of a central block, with projecting wings, each containing a gallery and cells on one side only.

The well-informed collaboration between an enthusiastic gentleman amateur, a craftsman builder, and a professional architect in some ways encapsulates the evolving nature of the architectural profession in the late eighteenth century. But the opinions of the practitioners were mediated by the Quakers' belief that all voices should be heard; it is the addition of the members of the Society that makes the design process of the Retreat peculiarly Quaker. Collective decision making was extremely important in Quaker business conduct and Tuke requested a plan from Bevans at an early date because 'it may afford an opportunity for improvements to be suggested or at least for Friends different ideas to be well considered, for we must expect diversity of Opinions'.<sup>73</sup> The pencil annotations on Atkinson's first plans and elevations of the Retreat in the bound booklet suggest this did happen.

A letter to Tuke from William Proud in Hull illustrates the detailed nature of consultation between the elders of the York Monthly Meeting and the members. It testifies to the active engagement of members of the wider Quaker community in a genuinely collaborative process, with attention to detail and the act of marking suggestions in pencil on the plans. Proud had looked at these for about two hours with several others. He commented:

The alteration in the fronts and the road appear to answer. But we all unitedly demur to thy proposed situation for the Stable, cowshed, Pig sty and necessaries, adjoining the east wing, altho' we at the same time see the back of the Stable etc. might serve in lieu of a wall for a walking yard for the patients and also we approve some such yard.

But we disapprove this situation for the aforesaid buildings because

1st This would occasion either an obstruction to the view out of the long passage window or otherwise exhibit a nauseous one.

2nd In Case of ever adding to this east wing these would be to

remove – from hence and some other considerations those conveniences appear better to us all if placed about as Parkinson has pencil'd near the south east corner of the garden fronting the lane so as to leave space on the road side for carts to load in and for taking away the manure etc. . . .

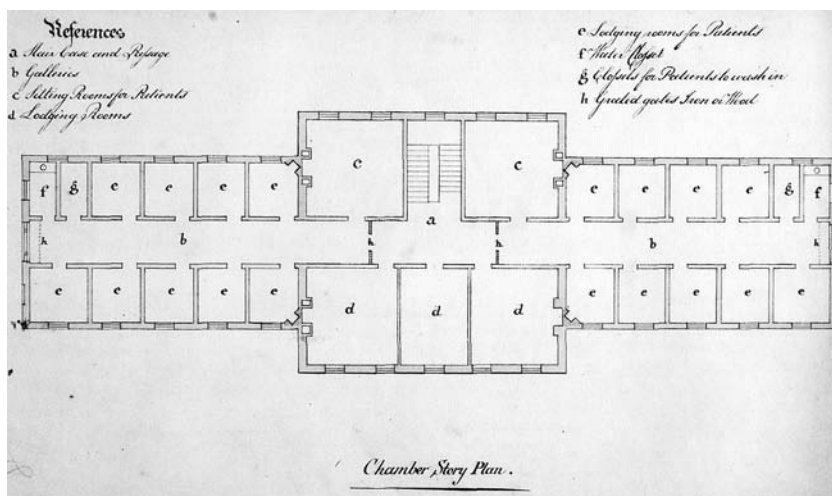
My wife and Jane Stickney do not like the melancholy appearance of the wing Windows neither do any of us but we do not clearly understand whether they be intended to shew more glass.<sup>74</sup>

While there is no discussion of aesthetic theory, the importance of the view is apparent, not only that of the building but also that from it, for the residents. On the first storey of the central block, two large rooms at the rear described as 'sitting rooms for patients', commanded views over the garden to the south (Figure 5.11). Tuke had thought it unwise, however, to have the patients watching the entrance and revealed his reasoning:

I suppose the Common entrance to the house to be on the North, and as it may not be proper for Patients who are well enough to sit in a Parlour, to see all persons who go and come; their Parlours should open to the South.<sup>75</sup>

These letters demonstrate the seriousness with which the wider Society engaged with the scheme. The design of the Retreat was an expression of Quaker collective modes of conduct.

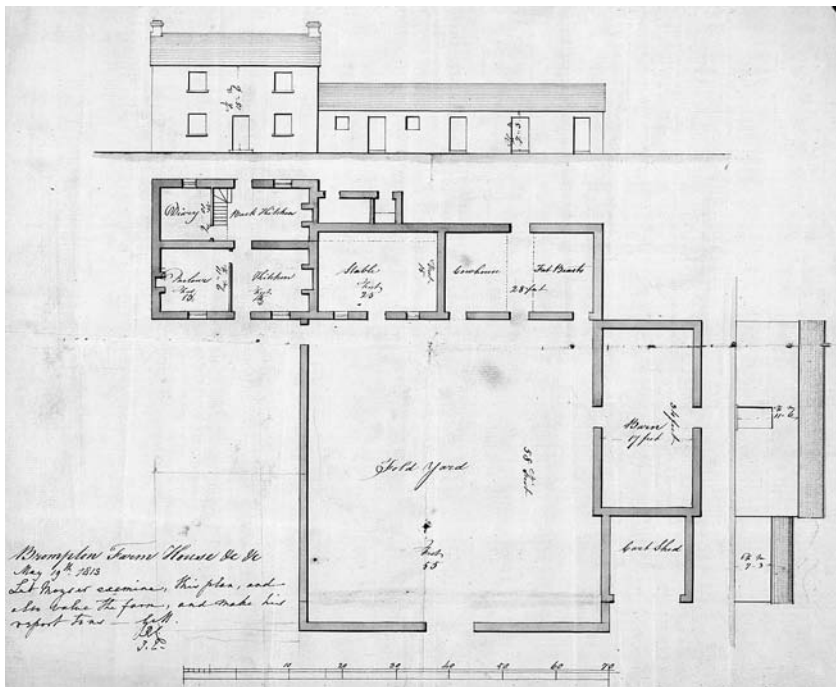
Atkinson's plan of the ground floor incorporates design advice from Howard – regarding the positioning of people by the entrance, to act as gatekeepers.<sup>76</sup> It largely follows the plan of St Luke's, so Friends' desires to replicate best practice were satisfied. However, whereas the wings reflect St Luke's, the disposition of space in the central block, with the exception of the presence of a



5.11  
The York Retreat,  
proposed first-  
floor plan, Peter  
Atkinson the  
Elder, 1794.

Committee Room, resembles a farmhouse plan such as would have been familiar to those country-dwelling Quakers. The ground-floor central block consists of four large rooms; three are two bays wide, while the fourth, to the right-hand side of the front door, is divided into three smaller rooms – the housekeeper's room, the dairy and the pantry. The plan of Old Maid's Farm, in Brompton-on-Swale near Catterick, affords a comparative view of a Yorkshire farmhouse of the period (Figure 5.12). Its main block has four rooms: a dairy, a back kitchen, a parlour and the first room into which the front door opens – the kitchen.<sup>77</sup> The influence of a generic rural domestic ordering of space upon the central block of the Retreat is clear to discern.

It is especially notable that the kitchen is immediately off the main entrance hall. This was not the case in hospitals such as the York County Hospital and the York Asylum. Public institutions which provided domestic care typically demoted services to the peripheries of the building, in wings or the basement – as in St Luke's – or to the rear. Bevans had originally suggested their removal to a separate wing: 'I apprehend where the kitchen and wash house are placed, and to have them, if possible, detached, unless they could be arched, which would require the Walls much thicker and of course attended with much more Expense'.<sup>78</sup> His suggestion was not taken up, and what is distinctively Quaker about the plan of the Retreat is that here the household services were at the heart of the main block, as in a farmhouse. This arrangement was only possible because there were no grand public rooms. In conventional contemporary hospitals, suites of professional offices and consulting rooms occupied the prestigious principal rooms, and this was reflected in their interior appointments. Friends' dislike of hierarchical authority is expressed



5.12  
Old Maid's Farm,  
Brompton-on-  
Swale, North  
Yorkshire, plan  
and elevation  
of a farmhouse,  
1813.

in the plan of the Retreat, where there is no professional office, merely a committee room for the trustees, and a room for the housekeeper. This reinforces the centrality of the collective and the quotidian. The closeness of patients to domestic activity, rather than being concealed, as elsewhere, manifested the Friends' belief in hard work and self-discipline as a means to redemption, albeit grilles across the corridor prevented patients wandering unsupervised.

As we have seen, the importance of the kitchen to the Quaker concept of home can be illustrated by plans of North-country meeting houses where, in addition to rooms for silent congregation, a kitchen was typically included (Figure 5.7). Friends often travelled great distances to attend meetings and hospitality was an essential element of care for co-religionists. The presence of domestic staff in the heart of the asylum, as in a farmhouse kitchen, enabled them to double-up as supervisors. Howard's praise for the asylum in Constantinople was in part associated with safety: 'The keeper has a room or two in the middle of the area, from whence he has a full view of the entrance, and of all that passes'.<sup>79</sup> The need for surveillance was a topic on which the national authorities, Howard, Bentham and John Aikin all concurred. Aikin spelt out what he saw as the clinical requirements for the attention of patients:

As its seat [lunacy] appears to be rather in the mind than the body, the attention of art must be chiefly directed to acquire a proper government over the temper and passions, by means of contrary affections of the mind; a task which necessarily supposes constant observation and great experience in these particular cases, together with that firmness and total absence of terror which can only be gained by habit.<sup>80</sup>

In keeping with Howard's requirement, Tuke wrote:

Considering the state of the patients, it appears desirable that some of the managers and Servants when employed about their Business should be so situated as to be like centinels to all the outer doors; this idea induced me to place the kitchen as the inlet and outlet from and to that part of the Ground into which Patients might be occasionally admitted.<sup>81</sup>

Yet surveillance at the Retreat was not informed by Bentham's 'principle of omnipresence', but rather by the model of the familial home. This emphatically domestic cast emerges from the Friends' dislike of overt conventional authority, and the importance they attached to the family. Indeed, they referred to the community as such – the founders specified that the Retreat should have 'Garden Ground for the Family'.<sup>82</sup>

On the first floor, the patients' lodgings account for most of the wings (Figure 5.11). The four rooms closest to the main block, and able to share a chimney flue, are privileged in having fireplaces. These were intended for patients from more socially elevated backgrounds. Tuke explained the reasons for incorporating such distinctions into the Retreat's provision as follows:

It may be proper to remark that the Proposals are to provide

accommodation for thirty patients – Public Buildings of this kind are in general appropriated solely for the Benefit of the Poor, but this is intended for Persons in profession with us of all Ranks with respect to prosperity and those whose Circumstances will afford it may be charged more than they cost the Institution in order to reduce the Terms for the Poor. It seems reasonable that such Patients be in some respects differently accommodated especially such of them whose Minds are capable of enjoying privileges, to which they have formerly been accustomed – Some Rooms should therefore in my apprehension be constructed with that view. . . . The Rooms in the Central part of the Building are devised for the managers and Patients in good circumstances.<sup>83</sup>

This divergence from the expressed egalitarianism of the Society of Friends reflects the desire to retain the social identity of the patient, to ease rehabilitation into the class-based society of the day.

The rooms in the central block on the south side were designated ‘sitting rooms for patients’. Here large sash windows enabled patients to appreciate God’s work in the natural environment – the Retreat’s elevated location afforded it a rare occurrence in York, a prospect. These rooms would have commanded views over the gardens that were an essential element of the therapy. Extensive planting had taken place before a brick was laid. It has been argued that the Quaker botanical aesthetic was developed as a ‘middle term’ that connected nature with its creator.<sup>84</sup> It is not specified for whom these rooms were intended. Common sense suggests that they were for the staff, but the omission of professional nomenclature results in anonymity and an effacing of the medical profession. The plan illustrates the desire to replicate best practice in London, and to preserve the comforts of the home, rather than to create an institutional setting.

Overall, the York Retreat was a classical villa constructed without reference to Vitruvius or architectural theorists of the day. It was constructed of local materials in the local – urban – vernacular, and it reflected the plain style required by Quaker restrictions. It was designed through collaboration and responded to current best practice. It was referred to in the records as ‘the House’ and the community there was ‘the Family’, reflections of the centrality of the domestic model which informed both Quaker identity and design.<sup>85</sup>

So how did such a foundation come to change Friends’ attitudes towards architecture? By sheer good fortune, or careful family management, founder William Tuke’s daughter Anne had married the publisher William Alexander who provided the conduit through which the Retreat was announced to the world. The *Description of the Retreat an Institution near York* of 1813 by Samuel Tuke was one of the first detailed and comprehensive accounts of the founding of a lunatic asylum, and, more importantly, of a therapeutic regime.<sup>86</sup> In advertising the Retreat, William Tuke’s grandson, Samuel, responded to the long Quaker tradition of publishing. It was a means of both validating and disseminating Friends’ oppositional mode of living, and it converged with a desire for transparency. Through Tuke’s text the Retreat became a model for humane asylum design, despite his rather disingenuous claim that ‘I am,

however, far from imagining that this Asylum is a perfect model for others, either in regard to construction or management. If several improvements have been successfully introduced, it is probable that many others remain unattempted'.<sup>87</sup> But it was not merely the relative novelty of the subject matter which made Tuke's *Description* such an astonishing success. The account of the founding, building and furnishing of the institution is accompanied by descriptions of the Retreat's treatment regime and ethos. All this was illustrated by plans and views, supplied by Peter Atkinson the Younger, the son of the architect who had worked on its construction.<sup>88</sup> The comprehensiveness of Samuel Tuke's account was supplemented by the endorsement of visitors whose enthusiastic opinions were recorded.<sup>89</sup>

But Samuel Tuke was not an impartial agent in the recording of the family project. Together with Godfrey Higgins, a Doncaster magistrate, he was prosecuting a campaign for reform at the York Asylum.<sup>90</sup> Anne Digby suggests that 'there had been a suspicion since 1788 that it [the York Asylum] was not realising its original ideals'.<sup>91</sup> The contemporary York historian William Hargrove summarized the situation:

Though visitors were appointed at the Asylum from 1782, of which the Doctor [Alexander Hunter] generally continued to be one, yet in 1794 they were discontinued; and the miserable inmates of the house were, in great measure, left wholly at the disposal of their merciless keepers.<sup>92</sup>

In 1813 concerns regarding the closed nature of the Asylum resulted in the decision of forty Yorkshire gentlemen to pay the £20 subscription which would qualify them as governors of the institution. This membership granted them rights to inspect the hospital; Samuel Tuke was one of these gentlemen. In 1814 Higgins paid the asylum a surprise visit and discovered evidence of the physical abuse of patients who were kept in squalor; this triggered a campaign of reform.<sup>93</sup>

Thanks to the cause célèbre and the publication of the *Description*, Higgins and Tuke were called to give evidence to the Select Committee on Madhouses which sat between 1814 and 1816. The Reverend Sydney Smith,<sup>94</sup> sometime resident of neighbouring Heslington, writing in 1817, claimed that 'the new Establishment began the great revolution upon this subject'.<sup>95</sup>

Within a few years of the publication of his *Description* Tuke had positioned himself as a national authority on ethical asylum design. He wrote *Practical Hints on the Construction and Economy of Pauper Lunatic Asylums*, which was published by Alexander in 1815.<sup>96</sup> Four years later, in 1819, together with the architects Charles Watson and J. P. Pritchett, he published *Plans, Elevations, Sections and Descriptions of the Pauper Lunatic Asylum lately erected at Wakefield*. The Wakefield asylum had been built by Watson, who was the son of John Watson, who had worked on Ackworth School.<sup>97</sup> He moved from Wakefield to York to join Pritchett and shortly afterwards they redesigned York Meeting House, which was presented in Alexander's *Observations on the Construction and Fitting up of Meeting Houses*.<sup>98</sup>

This activity in Yorkshire was followed by a wider extension of the Friends' interest in architectural practice and an embrace of the emergent architectural profession itself. This was anticipated by the Quaker Joseph Woods, who had

trained at the Royal Academy Schools in 1798, founded the London Architectural Society in 1806, and edited the fourth volume of Stuart and Revett's *Antiquities of Athens*.<sup>99</sup> Subsequently, William Alderson, another Friend, designed a school for Quakers in Wigton, now in Cumbria, at a date before 1828; the Hanwell Asylum between 1829 and 1831; and meeting houses in Hertfordshire and Middlesex.<sup>100</sup> Friend Thomas Rickman, originally a cornfactor, taught himself both architectural history and architectural design, and Howard Colvin records him as 'one of the busiest architects in England' between 1820 and 1835.<sup>101</sup> Just over the Yorkshire county boundary in Darlington, where there was a vibrant and influential Quaker community, local Quaker Joseph Sparkes designed the new Mechanics' Institute in 1854.<sup>102</sup> Darlington was also the home to the town hall designed by Friend Alfred Waterhouse, and constructed between 1861 and 1863.<sup>103</sup> The enormously successful career of Waterhouse, who was elected as a Royal Academician in 1885 and who rose to become President of the Royal Institute of British Architects between 1888 and 1891, seems to confirm that Quaker attitudes and established architectural practice had become entirely compatible.

The lack of rigid Quaker dogma always allowed the Friends to evolve by adapting to changing social circumstances. The publications produced by the Tuke family, beginning with the *Description*, were instrumental in enabling Quakers to accept architectural practice. The founding of the Retreat was demonstrably a Quaker project throughout. It not only convinced members of the Society of Friends that large-scale institutions required professional design, but also proved that the design process could be collaborative and well informed. Friends had created a large semi-public space in which their wider humanitarian projects might be furthered; campaigns for both improved conditions for patients and the abolition of slavery were conducted from the Retreat. It was a space that was thus invested with a moral weight partly because it had been 'right-ordered' in its design, in its process and in its end result, and partly because it made possible the pursuit of a national agenda of social reform. This empowered Quakers to disseminate their building practice through the conventional medium of the architectural treatise, which was adapted to include a distinctive and empirical Quaker tone. The Retreat came to represent a mode of muscular, campaigning, philanthropic architecture with a conscience that demonstrated both benevolence and a challenge to injustice. The Quakers demonstrated that there was a genuinely alternative approach to philanthropy; public buildings, instead of being understood as vehicles for civic pride and regeneration, could also be sequestered, undemonstrative and self-effacing.

## Acknowledgements

At the York Retreat, David Mitchell, the Estates Manager, lent me his office and his time and shared his considerable knowledge of the history of the institution. The biggest debt, as ever, is owed to Dr Anthony Geraghty and Professor Mark Hallett, whose criticism and direction are always delivered with a blend of wisdom, authority and kindness.



## Notes

- 1 For the most comprehensive account of the Retreat, see Anne Digby, *Madness, Morality and Medicine* (Cambridge, 1985). See also Roy Porter, *Mind-Forg'd Manacles: A History of Madness in England from the Restoration to the Regency* (London, 1990), p. 223.
- 2 eds Clare Cooper Marcus and Marni Barnes, *Healing Gardens: Therapeutic Benefits and Design Recommendations* (Chichester, 1999), pp. 236–7.
- 3 A good introduction to the early history of the Quakers can be found in Pink Dandelion, *An Introduction to Quakerism* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 13–70; James Walvin, *The Quakers: Money and Morals* (London, 1997), pp. 7–27; ed. Douglas V. Steere, *Quaker Spirituality: Selected Writings* (London, 1984), pp. 46–54. Sheila Wright, *Friends in York: The Dynamics of Quaker Revival 1780–1860* (Keele, 1995), pp. 11–19 gives an excellent view on the local Quaker context. For a more general overview of Quakers in the context of Nonconformism, see Edward Royle, *Modern Britain, A Social History 1750–1997*, 2nd edn (London, 1997) and Clyde Binfield, *So Down to Prayers: Studies in English Nonconformity 1780–1920* (London, 1977). For Fox, see H. Larry Ingle, 'Fox, George (1624–1691)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004) [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10031 (accessed 5 September 2008)].
- 4 Dandelion, *Quakerism*, p. 64.
- 5 *Some Account of the Life and Religious Labours of Sarah Grubb, with an Appendix Containing an Account of Ackworth School* (Dublin, 1792), p. 320.
- 6 'Friends' was, in fact, a term not widely used until the early nineteenth century.
- 7 Pierre-Jean Grosley, *A Tour to London: or New Observations on England, and its Inhabitants*, 3 vols (Dublin, 1772), II, p. 120.
- 8 Barthélemy Faujas de St-Fond, *Travels in England, Scotland and the Hebrides*, 2 vols (London, 1799), I, p. 120.
- 9 Porter, *Manacles*, p. 67.
- 10 For York Asylum, see the entry for Bootham Park Hospital in Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, *City of York*, 4 (London, 1975), p. 47. William Mason, *Animadversions on the Present Government of the York Lunatic Asylum in which the Case of Parish Paupers is Distinctly Considered in a Series of Propositions* (York, 1788), p. 22. The York Asylum was covertly a project of the Whig Rockingham interest in the county and funded in part with the profits of East India Company trading, which Mason found immoral; see Ann-Marie Akehurst, 'Architecture and Philanthropy: Building Hospitals in Eighteenth-Century York' (doctoral thesis, University of York, 2008).
- 11 Borthwick Institute for Historical Archives, University of York, York Retreat Papers (hereafter BIHR, RET), 1/1/1/1, Retreat Directors' Minute Book 1792–1841. The narrative is rehearsed in William Hargrove, *History and Description of the Ancient City of York*, 2 vols (York, 1818), II, p. 540; H. C. Hunt, *A Retired Habitation: A History of the Retreat at York* (London, 1932), p. 13; Mary R. Glover, *The Retreat York: An Early Experiment in the Treatment of Mental Illness* (York, 1984), p. xii; William K. and E. Margaret Sessions, *The Tukes of York in the Seventeenth, Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (York, 1971), p. 55; Wright, *Friends*, p. 69; Roy Porter, *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind* (London, 1997), p. 497; ed. Allan Ingram, *Patterns of Madness in the Eighteenth Century: A Reader* (Liverpool, 1998), p. 235; Nancy Gerlach-Spriggs, Richard Enoch Kaufman and Sam Bass Warner, Jr, *Restorative Gardens: The Healing Landscape* (London, 1998), p. 101; Barry Edgington, 'A Space for Moral Management: The York Retreat's Influence on Asylum Design', in *Madness, Architecture and the Built Environment: Psychiatric Spaces in Historical Context*, eds Leslie Topp, James E. Moran and Jonathan Andrews (Abingdon, 2007), pp. 89–90, although in this last case both the name and the date are erroneous.
- 12 Anne Digby, 'Tuke, William (1732–1822)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004) [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27810 (accessed 12 October 2008)].
- 13 Richard Cockin and James Jenkins, *Pen Pictures of London Yearly Meeting, 1789–1833*, Pt I, 1789–1808 (London, 1929), p. 25.

- 14 *Yorkshire Observer*, 1822, as cited in BIHR, TUKE 122, 'William Tuke: The Founder of the York Retreat' (York, 1855), p. 4.
- 15 Walvin, *The Quakers*, p. 16.
- 16 Joseph Pike, *An Epistle to the National Meeting of Friends, Dublin, Concerning Good Order and Discipline in the Church* (Wilmington, Del., 1783), p. 10.
- 17 Friends' Meeting House Library, Euston Road, London, *Index of Occupations*, vol. 1, A–C. Avis was a Master Carpenter and Merchant Taylor. He appears in the Merchant Taylors' records as having been made free in 1664, suggesting a date of birth around 1643 (Guildhall Library, MS 34037/1). It has been suggested that Robert Hooke, rather than Avis, may have supplied the design for Bevis Marks Synagogue. My colleague at the University of York, Matthew Walker, presently researching Hooke, has documented Avis's role in other projects. He supports the attribution to Avis, who is documented on a building contract of 1699 as the builder of the synagogue. See, ed. Lionel D. Barnett, *Bevis Marks Records* (Oxford, 1940), I, p. 24.
- 18 Howard M. Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects, 1600–1840*, 4th edn (London, 2008), p. 1060.
- 19 Rob Goodbody, 'Gill, Joseph (1675–1742)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004) [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/64720 (accessed 12 October 2008)].
- 20 John Fitzhugh Millar, 'Harrison, Peter (1716–1775)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004) [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/60838 (accessed 12 October 2008)].
- 21 Elvira Vipont, *Ackworth School: From its Foundation in 1779 to the Introduction of Co-Education in 1946* (London, 1950), p. 11.
- 22 Colvin, *Dictionary*, p. 1091.
- 23 William Tuke assisted his second wife Esther in founding Trinity Lane Quaker Girls' School, the antecedent of the current Mount School, in 1785. The Retreat was ultimately followed in 1813 by a school for the poor girls of York and in 1818 by a York boys' school that was later to become Bootham School. This suite of projects was the product of a revival in philanthropic Quaker activity in the late eighteenth century. The foundations thus created can be seen as a dissenting alternative to the network of public buildings established in York by the aristocratic and urban elite during the preceding century. See Stephen Allott, *Friends in York: The Quaker Story in the Life of a Meeting* (York, 1978), pp. 68–73; Wright, *Friends*, pp. 78–9.
- 24 Walvin, *The Quakers*, pp. 16.
- 25 Dandelion, *Quakerism*, p. 26.
- 26 Dandelion, *Quakerism*, p. 56.
- 27 Frederick B. Tolles, "'Of the Best Sort but Plain": The Quaker Esthetic', *American Quarterly*, 11/4 (Winter, 1959), pp. 484–502 (p. 486).
- 28 Dandelion, *Quakerism*, p. 67.
- 29 Hubert Lidbetter, *The Friends Meeting House* (York, 1961), p. 4.
- 30 David Butler, *Quaker Meeting Houses of the Lake Counties* (London, 1978), p. iv. See also, Lidbetter, *Meeting House*, p. 14 for Countersett. For Heights and Colthouse, see Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: North Lancashire* (Harmondsworth, 1969), pp. 90, 140. For Brigflatts, see Nikolaus Pevsner and Enid Radcliffe, *The Buildings of England: Yorkshire, West Riding* (Harmondsworth, 2001), p. 435.
- 31 Lidbetter, *Meeting House*, p. 21.
- 32 William Alexander, *Observations on the Construction and Fitting up of Meeting Houses etc. for Public Worship* (York, 1820).
- 33 *Some Account of the Life of Joseph Pike*, Friends' Library, 2 (1838), p. 379, cited in Tolles, 'Plain', p. 492, n. 24.
- 34 Faujas de Saint-Fond, *Travels*, 1, pp. 117–18.
- 35 Susan Garfinkel, 'Letting in "the World": (Re)interpretive Tensions in the Quaker Meeting House', *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, 5: *Gender, Class and Shelter* (1995), p. 81.

- 36 For Atkinson, see Ivan Hall, 'Atkinson, Peter (*bap.* 1780, *d.*1843)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004) [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/854 (accessed 12 October 2008)]; Colvin, *Dictionary*, pp. 76–7. For John Carr, see Ivan Hall, 'Carr, John (1723–1807)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004) [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4747 (accessed 12 October 2008)]; Colvin, *Dictionary*, pp. 221–9. For Bevans, see Colvin, *Dictionary*, p. 123.
- 37 BIHR, RET 2/2/1/1, Building of the Retreat, Correspondence, Letter 9, John Bevans to William Tuke, 12 December 1794.
- 38 BIHR, RET 2/1/1/1 (2), South Front Elevation for the Proposed Retreat.
- 39 Colvin, *Dictionary*, pp. 76–7; *The Dictionary of Architecture*, ed. Wyatt Papworth for the Architectural Publication Society, 8 vols, 1852–92, I, pp 118–19; Ivan Hall, 'Atkinson, Peter'; RCHME, *York*, 4, p. 51.
- 40 Digby, *Madness*, pp. 17–18, 37–9.
- 41 For the clearest account of the Asylum controversy, see Anne Digby, 'Changes in the Asylum: The Case of York, 1777–1815', *Economic History Review*, ser. 2, 36 (1983), pp. 218–39.
- 42 BIHR, RET 2/1/1/1 (1–6), Drawings for the Proposed Retreat, 1794.
- 43 BIHR, RET 2/2/1/1, Building of the Retreat, Document 10, Minutes of Committee Meeting of around December 1793.
- 44 BIHR, RET 1/1/1/1, Retreat Directors' Minute Book 1792–1841, f. 15<sup>v</sup>.
- 45 For an account of the respective duties of measurers, see Colvin, *Dictionary*, pp. 18–19: 'Most architects were prepared to act as measuring surveyors and although the engagement of a surveyor did not necessarily mean going to him for the design, the two functions were so intimately associated that the terms "architect" and "surveyor" were almost synonymous in eighteenth-century parlance'.
- 46 For Hackness, see Colvin, *Dictionary*, p. 76.
- 47 Lidbetter, *Meeting House*, p. 17. In fact, there were classical elements in Bevans's designs of 1786 for the Quaker workhouse and school in Clerkenwell; see ed. Philip Temple, *Survey of London*, 46: *South and East Clerkenwell* (London, 2008), pp. 341–2.
- 48 BIHR, RET 2/2/1/1, Building of the Retreat, Correspondence, Letter 12, John Bevans to William Tuke, 20 January 1794, and Letter 14, John Bevans to William Tuke, 31 January 1794.
- 49 P. M. Tillott, *A History of Yorkshire, The City of York* (London, 1961), p. 208.
- 50 RCHME, *York*, 4, p. 47. See also, ed. Harriet Richardson, *English Hospitals 1660–1948* (Swindon, 1998), p. 156.
- 51 BIHR, RET 2/2/1/1, Building of the Retreat, Correspondence.
- 52 BIHR, RET 2/2/1/1, Building of the Retreat, Correspondence, Letter 16, John Bevans to William Tuke, 26 February 1795.
- 53 Wright, *Friends*, p. 18.
- 54 Rod Morgan, 'Howard, John (1726?–1790)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004) [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13922 (accessed 24 May 2009)].
- 55 Jeremy Bentham, *Panopticon; or, The Inspection-House* (Dublin, 1791). Tuke's daughter, Sarah Grubb, was living in Dublin, where Bentham published, and the Friends' excellent networks make it likely that Tuke was aware of Bentham's new ideas. For Bentham, see F. Rosen, 'Bentham, Jeremy (1748–1832)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004) [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2153 (accessed 15 October 2008)].
- 56 Bentham, *Panopticon*, pp. 96–8. Walvin, *The Quakers*, pp. 124–31. For the life of Quaker prison reformer Elizabeth Fry, see Francisca de Haan, 'Fry [née Gurney], Elizabeth (1780–1845)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004) [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10208 (accessed 24 May 2009)].
- 57 BIHR, RET 1/1/1/1, Retreat Directors' Minute Book 1792–1841, f. 4<sup>r</sup>.
- 58 Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. Richard Howard (London, 1999), pp. 241–55.
- 59 Mason, *Animadversions*, p. 22.

- 60 BIHR, RET 1/1/1/1, Retreat Directors' Minute Book 1792–1841, f. 7'.
- 61 William Penn, *Some Fruits of Solitude, in Reflections and Maxims Relating to the Conduct of Human Life* (London, 1702), p. 73.
- 62 R. B. Wragg, *The Life and Works of John Carr of York* (Otley, 2000), p. 140.
- 63 BIHR, RET 1/1/1/1, Retreat Directors' Minute Book 1792–1841, f. 7'.
- 64 Cited in Samuel Tuke's *Description*, pp. 222–3, and translated by him from the French of a Swiss Dr de la Rive: 'Cette maison est située à un mille de York au milieu d'une campagne fertile et riante: ce n'est point l'idée d'une prison qu'elle fait naître, mais plutôt celle d'une grande ferme rustique, elle est entourée d'un jardin fermé'.
- 65 BIHR, RET 2/2/1/1, Building of the Retreat, Correspondence, Letter 8, Application to J. Bevans for a Plan, n.d.
- 66 BIHR, RET 2/2/1/1, Building of the Retreat, Correspondence, Letter 9, John Bevans to William Tuke, 12 December 1794.
- 67 BIHR, RET 2/2/1/1, Building of the Retreat, Letter 12, John Bevans to William Tuke, 20 December 1794.
- 68 John Aikin, *A View of the Character and Public Services of the Late John Howard* (London, 1792), pp. 39–40.
- 69 John Howard, *An Account of the Principal Lazarettos in Europe; with Various Papers Relative to the Plague* (Warrington, 1789).
- 70 Howard, *Lazarettos*, p. 139.
- 71 Jill Lever, *Catalogue of the Drawings of George Dance the Younger (1741–1825) and of George Dance the Elder (1695–1768) from the Collections of Sir John Soane's Museum* (London, 2003), p. 118, n. [34] 12–14, ground-floor plan and copies. See also, Christine Stevenson, 'Carsten Anker Dines with the Younger George Dance, and Visits St Luke's Hospital for the Insane', *Architectural History*, 44 (2001), pp. 153–61 (p. 155, Figure 2).
- 72 Howard, *Lazarettos*, pp. 139–40.
- 73 BIHR, RET, 2/2/1/1, Building of the Retreat, Correspondence, Letter 8, William Tuke to John Bevans, Application to Bevans for a plan, n.d.
- 74 BIHR, RET 2/2/1/1, Building of the Retreat, Correspondence, Letter 17, William Proud to William Tuke, 3 April 1794.
- 75 BIHR, RET 2/2/1/1, Building of the Retreat, Correspondence, Letter 11, William Tuke to John Bevans c.14 December 1793.
- 76 BIHR, RET 2/1/1/1(3), Ground-Storey Plan for the Proposed Retreat, 1794.
- 77 See also Robert Morris, *Rural Architecture Consisting of Regular Designs of Plans and Elevations for Buildings in the Country* (London, 1750), pl. 33; Susanna Wade Martins, *The English Model Farm: Building the Agricultural Ideal, 1700–1914* (Macclesfield, 2002), where Figure 31 shows plans of farmhouses in Nathaniel Kent's Flemish Farm and Norfolk Farm built at Windsor Great Park between 1791 and 1794.
- 78 BIHR, RET 2/2/1/1, Building of the Retreat, Correspondence, Letter 9, John Bevans to William Tuke, 12 December 1794.
- 79 Howard, *Lazarettos*, p. 64.
- 80 John Aikin, *Thoughts on Hospitals. With a Letter to the Author, by Thomas Percival, M.D. F.R.S.* (London, 1771), pp. 66–7.
- 81 BIHR, RET 2/2/1/1, Building of the Retreat, Correspondence, Letter 11, William Tuke to John Bevans, 14 December 1793.
- 82 BIHR, RET 1/1/1/1, Retreat Directors' Minute Book 1792–1841, f. 4'.
- 83 BIHR, RET 2/2/1/1, Building of the Retreat, Correspondence, Letter 8, Application to J. Bevans for a plan, n.d.
- 84 BIHR, RET, 2/2/1/1, Building of the Retreat, Document 10, Minutes of the Committee Meeting, n.d.; G. Cantor, 'Aesthetics in Science as Practised by Quakers in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', *Quaker Studies*, 4 (1999) pp. 1–20 (p. 6).

- 85 BIHR, RET 1/1/1/1, Retreat Directors' Minute Book 1792–1841, f. 7<sup>r</sup>; BIHR, RET 1/1/1/1, Retreat Directors' Minute Book 1792–1841, f. 4<sup>r</sup>.
- 86 Digby, 'Tuke, Samuel'.
- 87 Tuke, *Description*, p. xiii.
- 88 Ivan Hall, 'Atkinson, Peter'.
- 89 Tuke, *Description*, pp. 221–7, Appendix.
- 90 Alexander Gordon, 'Higgins, Godfrey (1773–1833)', rev. Myfanwy Lloyd, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004) [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13232 (accessed 5 September 2008)].
- 91 Digby, 'Changes', p. 224.
- 92 Hargrove, *The History of York*, II, p. 615.
- 93 Digby, 'Changes', pp. 224–5.
- 94 Peter Virgin, 'Smith, Sydney (1771–1845)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004) [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25903 (accessed 25 July 2008)].
- 95 Sydney Smith cited in Daniel Hack Tuke, 'The Early History of the Retreat York', *Journal of Mental Science*, n.s. 38, 125 (July 1892), p. 352.
- 96 Samuel Tuke, *Practical Hints on the Construction and Economy of Pauper Lunatic Asylums including the Instructions to the Architects who Offered Plans for the Wakefield Asylum and a Sketch of the Most Approved Design* (York, 1815).
- 97 Colvin, *Dictionary*, pp. 1091–2.
- 98 William Alexander, *Observations on the Construction and Fitting Up of Meeting Houses etc. for Public Worship* (York, 1820). I am grateful to William Sessions for granting me access to his personal copy of this rare publication.
- 99 G. S. Boulger, 'Woods, Joseph (1776–1864)', rev. Susie Barson, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004) [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29935 (accessed 12 October 2008)]. See also, J. Mordaunt Crook, 'The Pre-Victorian Architect: Professionalism and Patronage', *Architectural History*, 12 (1969), pp. 62–78.
- 100 Colvin, *Dictionary*, p. 63.
- 101 Ibid., pp. 863–8.
- 102 Victoria County History, *County of Durham*, IV (London, 2005), p. 41. I am grateful to Dr Elizabeth Williamson for drawing my attention to Darlington in discussion at the Art Workers' Guild after my symposium paper was delivered.
- 103 Colin Cunningham, 'Waterhouse, Alfred (1830–1905)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/36758 (accessed 12 October 2008)].

## Chapter 6

# Self-Conscious Regionalism

## Dan Gibson and the Arts and Crafts House in the Lake District

*Esmé Whittaker*

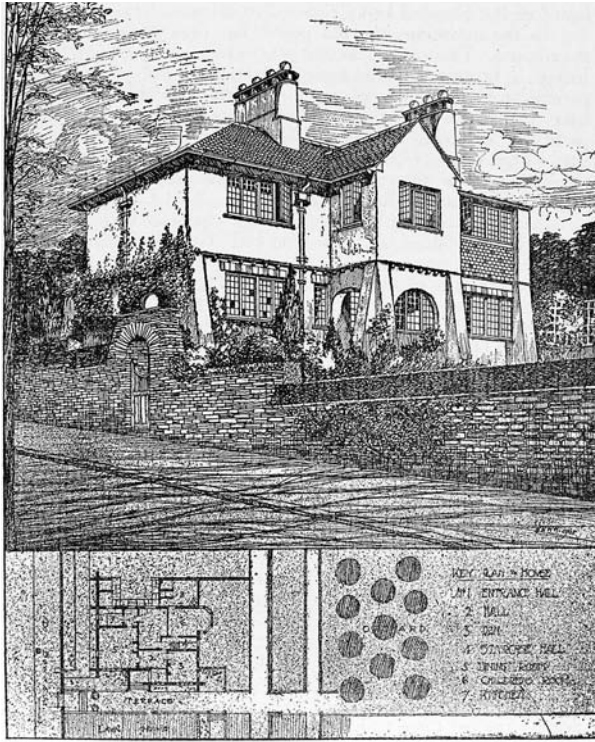
In 1902 the garden designer Thomas H. Mawson, in a lecture on 'The Unity of the House and Garden', quoted the advice given by William Wordsworth in the first decades of the previous century: 'Build long and low, said Wordsworth, advising a friend', and Mawson added,

those of you who know our bonny Westmorland, its old farmhouses (practically the only architecture we possess) will have realised how good that advice was. Surely it was the influence of the hills the poet loved so well which dictated this advice.<sup>1</sup>

It was the influence of another promoter of the Lake District vernacular that shaped the designs for Mawson's own house, The Corbels at Windermere, a house which, as he expressed in his autobiography, 'adhered to the architectural traditions of the Westmorland dales' (Figure 6.1).<sup>2</sup> Mawson commented,

I would at the time have slavishly followed the traditions of any locality wherein I was working, a state of mind which was doubtless, to some extent, the natural result of my passion for the works and views of Professor Ruskin.<sup>3</sup>

In 1810, in his *Guide to the Lakes*, Wordsworth advised that the indigenous architecture of the English Lake District should be taken as the model for new houses constructed within the region.<sup>4</sup> Twenty-six years later Ruskin echoed his description of Cumberland and Westmorland cottages in a series of essays on the 'Poetry of Architecture', recommending a cottage-villa hybrid as being the most suitable form



6.1  
The Corbels, 1898,  
Thomas Mawson  
and Dan Gibson,  
architects (from  
Thomas H. Mawson,  
*The Life and Work  
of an English  
Landscape Architect*  
[London, 1927]).

of architecture for the Lakeland hills.<sup>5</sup> However, it was not until the close of the nineteenth century that appreciation became emulation and vernacular architecture began to influence modern architectural practice in the Lake District. This chapter aims to establish why Wordsworth's and Ruskin's words, echoing through the interceding years, found a receptive audience at the end of the nineteenth century, exploring what the Lake District vernacular building, filtered by poetry and prose, represented to the Arts and Crafts architect.

A concern for locality, for the lessons drawn from the old farmhouses and their relationship to the Westmorland hills, found expression in the designs of the Arts and Crafts architect Dan Gibson, who from 1897 to 1899 was a partner in Thomas Mawson's practice and, during this period, collaborated with Mawson in designing The Corbels. Although Gibson was born in Bassingthorpe, Lincolnshire, and received his architectural training in Hull, in the office of Smith and Broderick, and then in London, with Ernest George and Peto, it was the Lake District that he adopted as his home. He became, in the words of Mawson, 'a joint possession living at Bowness and working at Windermere'.<sup>6</sup> Gibson's career was dominated by the creation of moderately sized houses, such as Brockhole (1899), Fellside (1902), Dawstone (1903) and White Craggs (1904), which were built in close proximity around Lake Windermere (Figures 6.2 and 6.3). His career was cut short by his sudden death in 1907, aged only 41, leaving one of his larger houses, Birket Houses in the Winster Valley, incomplete (Figure 6.4).

6.2  
Brockhole, 1899,  
Dan Gibson,  
architect.



Gibson's houses formed part of a string of Arts and Crafts properties built for the banks of Lake Windermere and its surrounding hillsides between 1898 and 1910.<sup>7</sup> The most well-known examples are Blackwell, by M. H. Baillie Scott, and Broadleys and Moor Crag, by C. F. A. Voysey, which were commissioned in 1898 and, like Gibson's designs, used the white roughcast walls and Westmorland slate roofs typical of the locality.<sup>8</sup> Although these were the same materials that Voysey used for houses throughout the country, it was only in his Lake District designs that he used green slate stone to form the walls and employed slate for internal features. For Moor Crag the source of the slate was close at hand; the stone that was removed

6.3  
Dawstone, 1903,  
Dan Gibson,  
architect.







6.4  
Birket Houses,  
1907, Dan  
Gibson,  
architect.

during the creation of the house's driveway was supplemented by slate quarried from a stone pit just above the site. Voysey's adherence to local building tradition is particularly evident in his treatment of the lodge house at Broadleys where the slate stone walls have been left unrendered, a practice which was common for outhouses or ancillary buildings in the region. According to a drawing published in the May 1900 issue of the *Architectural Review*, M. H. Baillie Scott had originally intended to leave Blackwell's slate stone walls exposed.<sup>9</sup> This drawing also reveals that the large tapered cylindrical chimneys, a traditional feature of Lakeland architecture which enhances Blackwell's regional identity, were conceived later in the design process, perhaps due to a heightened awareness of the local context.

However, it is Gibson's house designs, rather than those of more renowned contemporaries, which, through their use of forms, methods, materials and motifs, did the most 'to revive the type of architecture proper to the Lake District'.<sup>10</sup> Among the group of Arts and Crafts architects building by Lake Windermere, Gibson was one of the only architects to set up practice within the region, giving him greater opportunity to collaborate with local craftsmen and also to form a closer partnership with a garden designer who helped to shape the landscape of turn-of-the-century Lakeland.

Unlike the well-known Arts and Crafts architects, Voysey and Baillie Scott, Gibson has received little scholarly attention. Birket Houses was known locally as 'Dan Gibson's memorial' but memories fade quickly and Gibson's premature death combined with his own preference, according to Mawson, for the quieter shades of life have rendered Gibson almost as 'anonymous' as the builders of the vernacular cottages he admired.<sup>11</sup> This exploration of Gibson's work, therefore, relies heavily on the opinions of the more ambitious and prolific Mawson and the writer Lawrence Weaver, whose articles on 'The Lesser Country Houses of To-Day', published in *Country Life*, have provided a valuable insight into early twentieth-century

perceptions of Gibson's architecture.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, by considering for the first time a series of letters written by Gibson to members of his family, the architect's own voice can also join those of his collaborators and critics.<sup>13</sup>

### **A place apart: the Lake District as an outpost of tradition**

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Lake District, rural and remote, was celebrated as an outpost of tradition. To the author of *A Westmorland Village* writing in 1904, it was as though the small, rural Lake District communities existed outside history:

According to the old saying Troutbeck should be happy, for it has had no history, strictly speaking, and its story is made up of uneventful lives of an honest and frugal people, never passing rich, who tended their flocks of mountain sheep and reaped their oats without concerning themselves with the affairs of the nation.<sup>14</sup>

Vernacular building methods appeared to linger longer in this peripheral region, as it was thought that, before the building of the railways, distant, urban notions of style and fashion were unable to penetrate its hills. Lawrence Weaver was acutely aware of both the vernacular traditions of the country and the new developments in crafts and architecture that were taking place at the turn of the century. In publications such as *English Leadwork: Its Art and History* (1909) he noted how traditions were more entrenched within remote country districts which took longer to absorb the new motifs of changing architectural fashions. He gave as an instance of this phenomenon 'a rain-water-head of 1715 at Kendal, Westmorland, treated in a late-medieval spirit, which was departing from south country work a century earlier'.<sup>15</sup> Medieval traditions, which were no longer evident in the more accessible and urbanized southern counties, were perceived as living longer in the Lake District.

Weaver believed that, in a region where traditions were still alive among the local population, it was a simple and logical step from the vernacular buildings of the district to the creations of the Arts and Crafts architect. Describing the Lake District houses designed by Gibson, Weaver wrote, 'it was natural that he should pick up the threads of local building tradition where the Jacobean builders had dropped them, the more so as the later men had never wholly ceased to walk in the old ways'.<sup>16</sup> The academic manner of the eighteenth century was considered by Weaver to be merely a diversion. Dan Gibson returned local building to its proper path.

Dawstone (Figure 6.3) and Birket Houses (Figure 6.4), as Weaver observed, are imbued with the traditions of the locality and are reminiscent of the larger Lake District 'statesmen's' homesteads and old halls, dating from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, such as Newby Hall at Newby or Greenthwaite Hall at Greystoke.<sup>17</sup> Gibson adhered to vernacular practices in his choice of materials, his arrangement of plans and his treatment of details. The thick walls of the houses are built of local slate stone rendered with white roughcast and their roofs are made up of Westmorland slates from the nearby quarry at Tilberthwaite. At Birket Houses Gibson also re-used stones from an earlier farmhouse, a practice that simultaneously

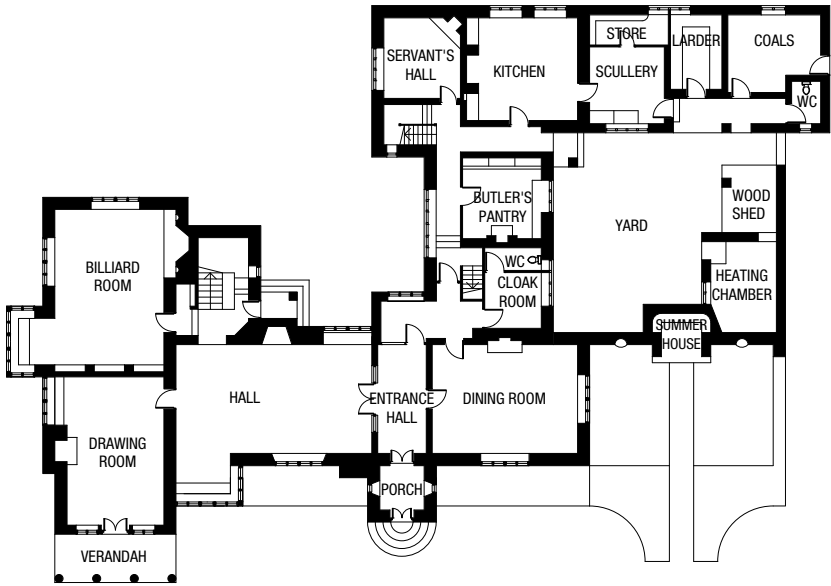
destroyed a vernacular building and continued a vernacular building method which, due to the small-scale quarries and the expense of materials before the beginning of the nineteenth century, involved stone being recycled wherever possible. Weaver was fascinated by the techniques that the local masons used to construct these sturdy and rain-resistant walls, their method of laying the stones with a minimum of mortar and an outward slope so that the walls are 'watershot'. When describing the process at another Lake District Arts and Crafts house, Cragwood, designed by Frank Dunkerley, he reiterates the region's status as an outpost of tradition, commenting that 'Westmorland seems to have preserved a living tradition of skill and sound work in the arts of building' no longer present in the neighbourhood of cities.<sup>18</sup>

Dawstone adheres to the H-shaped house plans prevalent in the Lake District with a central block containing a hall positioned between two cross-wings (Figure 6.5). Although the cross-wings do not extend beyond the south front, creating a continuous south façade, on the north side of the building their projection creates a courtyard sheltering the entrance way. Even the placing of the main stairwell within a projecting wing (on the west façade) is typical of traditional houses in this area. Birket Houses, when viewed from the south, echoes another common Lake District building design with a single cross-wing and a multi-storey porch projecting from the middle of the main elevation. As R. W. Brunskill explains, there was 'in the Lake Counties, as elsewhere in the north of England, a brief period in which simple non-fortified houses were equipped with a multi-storey porch giving emphasis to the entrance, and, perhaps, acknowledging the former importance of gatehouse and tower'.<sup>19</sup> While the tower-like porch recalled the defensive function of early Lakeland buildings, the small porch to the rear of Birket Houses resembles those commonly found on the exterior of Lake District cottages in order to defend the entrance from the Westmorland weather. The verandahs, utilized both at Dawstone and Birket Houses, redeploy an architectural feature which Henry Swainson Cowper noticed when he was describing the buildings of Hawkshead in his guidebook published in 1899. He observed that, 'a few of the houses had the lower storey deeply recessed and the upper one supported on a rude column'.<sup>20</sup>

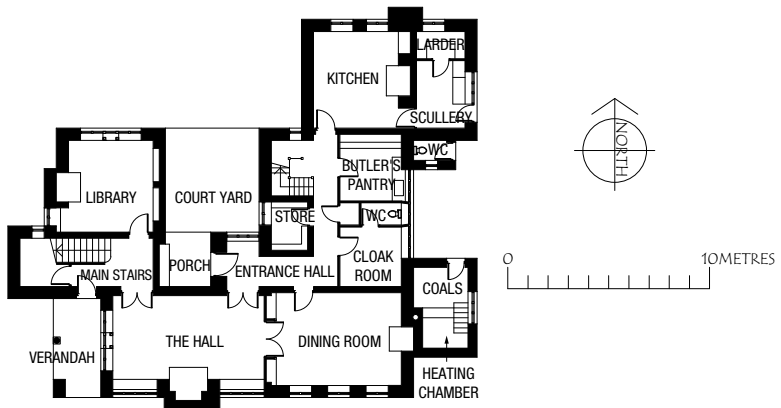
Gibson employed forms that echoed the previous functions of Lake District houses whether it was the defensive function of the tower or the practical function of the porch and recessed verandah. Yet his houses, built at the beginning of the twentieth century, also had to fulfil the requirements of the modern age. Higher standards of living combined with a desire for greater privacy meant that separate service areas were an essential feature of houses of this scale and status. The need to accommodate kitchens and servants' quarters led to the plans becoming more complex. At Dawstone the kitchen was housed within a rectangular block attached to the north end of the east cross-wing while at Birket Houses the kitchen and servants' quarters occupy an extensive L-shaped wing attached to the eastern end of the north front.<sup>21</sup> The more complex plans are also echoed in the rooflines of the houses in which the number of gables and chimneys, compared with the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century examples, has been multiplied.

Weaver saw what he termed Gibson's 'Jacobean treatment' as a 'natural flower of his character' and throughout his examination of the houses emphasized

6.5  
Plans of Birket  
Houses and  
Dawstone.



BIRKET HOUSES GROUND FLOOR PLAN



DAWSTONE GROUND FLOOR PLAN

a sense of continuity with a building tradition which, due to its peripheral location, he believed was still alive in Lakeland.<sup>22</sup> Yet, rather than a natural continuer of local tradition, Gibson was a professionally trained architect who made a self-conscious decision to engage with the vernacular approaches of the region, a decision inspired by Wordsworth's and Ruskin's writings, informed by his time in the London office of Sir Ernest George, and played out across the façade of one of his earliest Lake District houses. When viewed from the west, Brockhole (Figure 6.2), despite its

white roughcast surface and Westmorland slate roof, does not appear to engage with the local vernacular style of building. Its distinctive shaped gables, the delicate classical columns of the balcony, complex fenestration, dentil detailing and its arrangement of rectangular and rounded chimneys owe little to the Lakeland vernacular. This façade, particularly the shaped gables, seems to have more in common with Graythwaite Hall, the exteriors of which were re-clad in 1890, where Gibson had worked as the resident architect for Bolton architect Richard Knill Freeman. The eastern side of Brockhole, where the cross gables create an entrance courtyard, seems to hint at his later building style evident at Dawstone. However, it is in the gatehouse and stable block that we get a fuller indication of Gibson's more vernacular approach to design. The simplicity of this structure with its welcoming arched porch, robust roughcast buttresses, round chimneys, and casement windows reflects his house designs for Mawson and his family, such as *The Corbels* at Windermere (Figure 6.1). That Gibson felt freer to employ a vernacular style in the ancillary buildings is typical of the vernacular revival which began, on a national scale, in smaller estate buildings rather than country houses.<sup>23</sup>

By framing Gibson as a natural continuer of local traditions, Weaver was attempting to claim for a modern architect the qualities widely seen, at the close of the nineteenth century, as being inherent in the practice of the vernacular builder. Arts and Crafts practitioners admired the vernacular builder's 'unselfconscious' use of techniques which were passed down through generations of the local community. In his writings about the cottages of the Lake District, Ruskin perpetuated the myth of the unselfconscious peasant builder, a myth firmly discredited by recent vernacular studies, but one which was central to the ideology of the Arts and Crafts movement. Ruskin writes that:

The uncultivated mountaineer of Cumberland has no taste, and no idea of what architecture means; he never thinks of what is right, or what is beautiful, but he builds what is most adapted to his purposes, and most easily erected: by suiting the building to the uses of his own life, he gives it humility; and, by raising it with the nearest materials, adapts it to its situation. This is all that is required, and he has no credit in fulfilling the requirement, since the moment he begins to think of effect, he commits a barbarism by whitewashing the whole.<sup>24</sup>

The idea of the peasant builder acting spontaneously and unselfconsciously to produce a functional and contextually sympathetic building resonated with Arts and Crafts architects. It seemed to provide them with the possibility of escaping a society undergoing rapid change in which stylistic battles dominated architectural debate and architecture was gaining an increasingly professional status.

Yet, the elements of vernacular building methods which Arts and Crafts practitioners admired – unselfconsciousness, naturalness, anonymity – were precisely those which it was impossible for the modern professional architect to emulate. William Morris, addressing the Trades Guild of Learning in 1877, appreciated that it would be impossible for the architects of the late nineteenth century to

continue vernacular traditions as 'this art of unconscious intelligence is all but dead'; therefore we 'must hope to see in time its place filled by a new art of conscious intelligence'.<sup>25</sup> Although the 'unconscious intelligence' of the vernacular builder has rightly been dismissed, late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Lakeland was distinguished by a new level of consciousness or awareness of its vernacular traditions and a new understanding of how these traditions helped to form the region's distinctive identity.

### **Building long and low: Wordsworth as guide**

By engaging with the vernacular architecture of the Lake District, Gibson formed part of a wider phenomenon, a phenomenon which the historian J. D. Marshall has termed self-conscious regionalism.<sup>26</sup> Wordsworth was the original proponent of self-conscious regionalism. His poetry, informed by Lake District dialect and folk tales, combined with his influential *Guide*, provided a new appreciation of vernacular traditions. He cast a long shadow over nineteenth-century Lakeland, as W. G. Collingwood commented in his guidebook, *The Lake Counties*, 'Anyone who lives at the Lakes can hardly shake off Wordsworth. He haunts the place'.<sup>27</sup> The Victorians came to identify Wordsworth as a domestic poet intimately linked to his home in the Lake District. After his death in 1850, the writer Harriet Martineau, who lived at The Knoll (1845) in Ambleside, suggested that the most fitting Wordsworth memorial would be cottages for the poor. This idea was rejected but, by the close of the century, Wordsworth's own Lakeland vernacular cottage had been preserved as his shrine. As Stephen Gill explains, 'by raising the money to buy Dove Cottage so that it could be maintained and opened to the public, trustees identified the heart, so to speak, of Wordsworth'.<sup>28</sup> For the Victorians, Wordsworth's writings were inseparable from the cottage in which they were written, as Collingwood explains, 'There have been many Cumbrian poets, most of them, like Wordsworth at Grasmere, cottage folk, and, like him, at their best when they wrote of cottages and rural life'.<sup>29</sup>

With this emphasis placed upon the Lakeland cottage, Wordsworth's writings helped to shape the late nineteenth-century architect's approach to the vernacular architecture of the Lake District. Rather than unselfconsciously continuing local building traditions, the Arts and Crafts architect engaged with a vernacular architecture that had been mediated by Wordsworth's texts. His advice formed the framework for many of their discussions, as is evident in Mawson's lecture on 'The Unity of the House and Garden', and Wordsworth's admiration for the Lakeland round chimney helped to transform this feature, which was not widespread, into a symbol of local vernacular architecture.<sup>30</sup> He praised the visual effect of the tapered cylindrical chimney rising from its rectangular base as it gave 'to the cottage chimney the most beautiful shape in which it is ever seen' and he admired the 'pleasing harmony between a tall chimney of this circular form, and the living column of smoke ascending from it through the still air'.<sup>31</sup> Later in the century, according to the writings of H. D. Rawnsley, the local masons would still recall that 'Wudsworth was a girt un for chimleys . . . And heed a girt fancy an' aw for chimleys square up hauf way, and round t'other. And so we built 'em that road'.<sup>32</sup>

Wordsworth's views on vernacular architecture were not confined to his

writings: they had become embedded within the everyday life of the Lake District and began to affect the way in which people built. The symbolic role that the Lakeland round chimney assumed is evident in Gibson's exaggerated handling of the chimneys at Dawstone and Birket Houses. Compared with vernacular examples, such as those found at Townend, Troutbeck (Figure 6.6), the massive chimneys dominate the roofline of Gibson's buildings. The forms of the chimneys have been reduced to their basic geometric shapes, cylinders and rectangles, and the roughcast surface has become smooth and crisp. As if these sturdy chimneys were not sufficient, their rounded forms were repeated in the tapered columns of the verandahs.

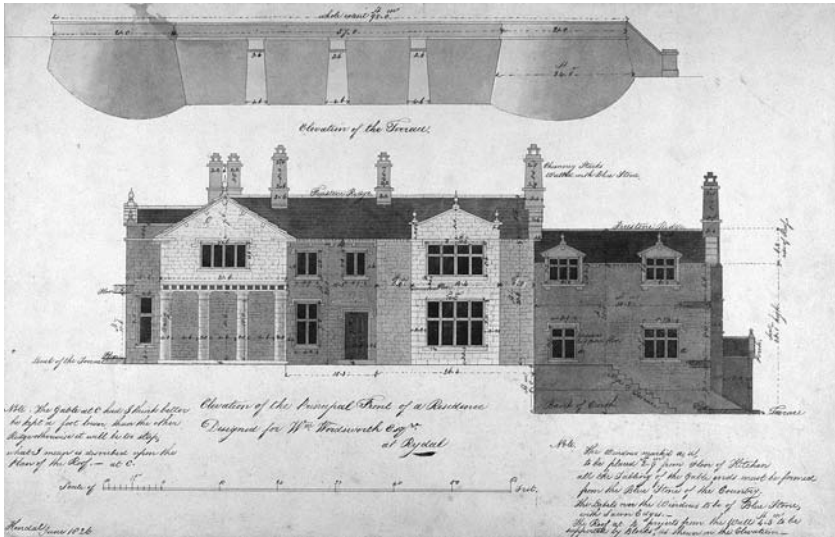
It was not only Wordsworth's poetry and prose that influenced late nineteenth-century architects. In 1826 Wordsworth turned to the vernacular buildings of the Lake District to provide the inspiration for a new home which he commissioned from the Kendal architect George Webster. It was to be built on a plot of land called The Rash, near to his current home, Rydal Mount. The house was never executed but the designs are a testimony to his admiration for vernacular architecture (Figure 6.7). Angus Taylor has made the link between these designs and the Lake District Arts and Crafts houses, asking 'Did the failure in 1826 in effect postpone a domestic vernacular revival to the end of the century, when Voysey and Baillie Scott built their splendid houses on Windermere? Looking at an example by a lesser contemporary, Dan Gibson, at Birket Houses, it is hard not to conclude that he knew the Webster's designs in Wordsworth's library'.<sup>33</sup> The similarities between Webster's working drawings for The Rash and Gibson's design for Birket Houses are striking. In both buildings the main façade is broken up by two components, a tall narrow cross-wing to the right, which at Birket Houses forms the multi-storey porch and at The Rash is a double-height bay window, and a verandah to the left. The houses also share similar details such as the distinctive tapered cylindrical chimneys, mullioned and transomed windows and oak-studded doors.



6.6  
Townend,  
Troutbeck,  
c.1626.

## 6.7

Design for The  
Rash, Rydal,  
1826, George  
Webster,  
architect,  
for William  
Wordsworth.



This comparison seems to suggest that Gibson was aware of Webster's design. But it could also indicate that both architects were looking to the same vernacular buildings for their inspiration. Webster's and Gibson's interpretations of these vernacular examples are subtly different. An air of refinement is captured at The Rash which is not present at Birket Houses. In Webster's design the chimneys and columns are taller and slimmer and the finials on the gables add a decorative touch, while Gibson creates a rougher effect with stout, robust chimneys and simple outlines that avoid fussiness. The Rash is also more eclectic in appearance. Although the verandah did have vernacular precedents, at The Rash it still seems classical in style, especially when combined with the Italianate terracing. This classical mood stands in contrast to the primitive appearance of the columns at Birket Houses. The refinement of Webster's designs is in tune with his earlier architectural output, 'classical' and 'Elizabethan' houses that ignored regional vernacular building methods, but also reflects Wordsworth's poetic technique of inserting vernacular language into polished verse. Peter Wright, in his study of Cumbrian dialect, believes that Wordsworth's efforts to polish his verse meant that it was during the next phase, after the Romantics, that Cumbrian dialect writing really began to flower.<sup>34</sup> Wordsworth made the first crucial steps towards a vernacular revival and continued to act as a guide for nineteenth-century architects, but for a fuller engagement with vernacular architecture the Lake District had to wait until the close of the century.

### Discovering a local identity: Dan Gibson and the Lake District craft revival

A number of Lake District dialect studies were published in the second half of the nineteenth century such as Robert Ferguson's *The Dialect of Cumberland* (1873). Ferguson was interested in local words not merely for their beauty or novelty but for their ability to unlock the history of the district and reveal the synthesis of indigenous



and imported traditions that formed its distinctive character.<sup>35</sup> As Wendy Kaplan has noted in relation to countries such as Norway and Finland, an interest in native language and legends was frequently a prelude to an interest in folk design.<sup>36</sup>

With Ruskin looking on from his Lake District home and providing an inspirational presence that lingered long after his death, a fervent craft revival began in turn-of-the-century Lakeland.<sup>37</sup> The methods of the local vernacular craftsmen set a precedent for such a revival taking place. Cowper, in his discussion of seventeenth-century Lake District wood carving, speculates how ancient traditional designs which had been lost for five or six hundred years were suddenly revived, 'If there is any truth that the interlaced knot pattern is the Norse twist, introduced by the Viking settlers in the ninth century, how was it kept in the minds of the dalesman during those long dark centuries?'<sup>38</sup> With the belief that remnants of the traditional skills possessed by their ancestors remained deep within the consciousness of the local population, figures such as Rawnsley created workshops that encouraged the local people to return to handicraft and regain the knowledge that had been temporarily forgotten.<sup>39</sup>

In 1901 Rawnsley commented that 'It is on the banks of Windermere today that the visitor may find the latest and not least sturdy plant of English handicraft of wood-carving, spinning, and weaving in full blossom', adding that

At Gill Head, Arthur Simpson, a true follower of Ruskin's teaching, and one who is proud of his profession as a maker and designer of furniture for household purposes, has been able to open a summer-school and to help a good number of willing pupils each year to learn something of the secrets of wood-craft in such scenery as keeps the heart at peace and the eyes filled with the reverence for nature.<sup>40</sup>

Gibson's signature appears in the visitors' books for this residential school of carving and for the showroom, named The Handicrafts, which Simpson opened in Windermere.<sup>41</sup> Arthur W. Simpson, through both friendship and professional collaborations, drew Gibson into this local, Ruskin-inspired craft revival.

In an account of Dan Gibson's life, written by Simpson after Gibson's death, the extent of their collaborative relationship is revealed. 'I was closely associated with him for about 10 years', Simpson wrote, 'and had the satisfaction of executing many commissions under him, both ecclesiastic and domestic and ever found him appreciative of honest endeavour'.<sup>42</sup> It is possible, therefore, that Simpson was responsible for carrying out the carved woodwork in Gibson's houses, such as the intricately carved overmantel in the dining room at Birket Houses, but without further documentation this cannot be verified. The success of their professional relationship relied upon the fact that 'In wood carving especially' Gibson 'allowed great liberty to the worker in carrying out the details of the design'.<sup>43</sup> Simpson, like the vernacular craftsman of Ruskin's writings, had the freedom to express himself in his work.

We know for certain that Gibson and Simpson collaborated on a project to remodel the offices that Gibson shared with Mawson on Crescent Road,

Windermere. An article and photographs in the *Builders' Journal and Architectural Record*, from December 1899, demonstrate that Simpson was responsible for the carved brackets over the front door and the creation of a high-backed settle and other office furniture for the interior.<sup>44</sup> It is possible that the architect's drawing table, 'in polished birch with copper ring handles', that Simpson exhibited at the 1899 Arts and Crafts Exhibition was intended for Gibson's office. Simpson's description that accompanied a photograph of this piece, among other examples of his furniture, in the *Building News*, states 'I may say that the whole idea in this furniture has been to keep it simple, and yet sufficiently relieved by decoration to make it interesting'.<sup>45</sup> This same combination of simply treated wood and decorative detailing characterized Gibson's designs for furniture, such as the presses he designed for the dining room at Dawstone, which will be discussed later. An early example of Gibson's sideboard designs may, in fact, have been carried out in collaboration with Simpson. A letter from Gibson to his brother John, dated December 1895, mentions, after a discussion of the flower motifs he was using to decorate two picture frames,

My friend Simpson, a cabinet and furniture maker, wants me to do something for the next Arts and Crafts [exhibition] after this time. It will probably take the form of a dining room side board or some piece of furniture where I can get a big frieze to work this kind of ornament in.<sup>46</sup>

The act of collaboration was an integral part of vernacular building methods. In his history of the Lake District, Collingwood writes that 'the ancient custom was for neighbours to give a "boonday" and help in putting up the house'.<sup>47</sup> Gibson and Simpson, at the request of the Revd Eric Robertson, of St John's Church in Windermere, were engaged in a project to create a chancel screen which involved a similar sense of community collaboration and which demonstrates the willingness of Arts and Crafts practitioners to operate in a vernacular mode. With Gibson providing designs and Simpson giving instructions on woodcarving, the chancel screen was carried out by amateur volunteers. Local men offered their time freely in order to beautify the parish church just as their ancestors, from a sense of duty rather than an expectation of payment, had come together to create a house. As an article in the *Magazine of Art*, from 1899, states, the screen, under Gibson and Simpson's professional directions, was carved by a monumental sculptor, a railway ticket-collector, a young boat builder, a school master and the church's vicar, and serves 'as a practical illustration of what can be done by a properly controlled utilisation of amateur talent'.<sup>48</sup> The chancel screen combines simple, strong timber shafting and intricate pierced panelling, depicting pomegranates and roses among a mass of intertwined stems and leaves. It was this balance between simplicity and decoration, combined with the promotion of local craftsmanship, that both Gibson and Simpson strove for in their work.

In the spirit of Ruskin's writings, Gibson wanted to nurture and celebrate the skills of the local blacksmith. In a letter to his mother from April 1906, he wrote 'someday I will try to show you some work of my blacksmith – in him I found a bulb eager to force his way through the hardest parched ground and now he is as full

of blossom and bloom as can be. He has made some locks, latches, door handles, fenders and fire grates the like of which have not been seen since the 17th century'.<sup>49</sup> At Dawstone, in particular, we are able to see the results of their combined efforts, from the circular rope-twist of the front-door handle, resting upon an intricate finger-plate decorated with cut-out initials and a date, to the metalwork of the windows, the simple curled end of a wrought-iron window-stay, the fleur-de-lis-like ends of a window catch, and the interlaced patterns and initials of the ventilation grilles. Gibson's encouragement of the local craftsmen was not restricted to the blacksmith. The master and journeyman joiners must also have benefited from Gibson's guidance and appreciated their working relationship as, at Gibson's funeral, they paid 'a touching tribute' to his memory.<sup>50</sup> Mawson, in his own tribute to Gibson, went so far as to suggest that his ability to nurture local talent produced craftsmen that were superior to their ancestors. Mawson believed that 'To the artisans having to do with buildings he was the best of school-masters: he knew their powers and was only satisfied with their best, and so successful was he that never before have we had such craftsmen in Lakeland'.<sup>51</sup>

### **Crossing the threshold: imitation, inspiration and the vernacular interior**

In his guide to the Lake District, Wordsworth remained on the outside of the vernacular cottage. The cottage was largely regarded as a picturesque addition to the landscape, as a combination of lines, textures, light and shade that added to the beauty of the visual scene, and though the cottage was imbued with associations of the simple, natural way of life led by its inhabitants, Wordsworth's account did not record the particulars of the interiors in which these lives were carried out.<sup>52</sup> Although he recommended that the exteriors of the new buildings constructed within the region should adhere to the local traditions evident in these cottages, Wordsworth did not consider that this adherence was necessary within the buildings' interiors. He believed that, 'modern internal convenience' should be confined within the 'external grace and dignity' exemplified by the ancient mansions.<sup>53</sup> The threshold of the house could also be the threshold between the past and the present; between the materials, textures, and associations provided by vernacular building methods and the comfort and convenience offered by modern design and technology.

It is this discontinuity between the exterior and the interior that Alan Crawford has observed when analysing the Arts and Crafts house in his contribution to the recent SAHGB publication, *Architecture and Englishness, 1880–1914*.<sup>54</sup> The problem of crossing the threshold, outlined by Crawford, stems from the fact that the interiors of the Arts and Crafts houses do not appear to have even the general resemblance to vernacular buildings which is evident on the houses' exteriors. They seem – with an emphasis on light and space – to contradict the uncomfortable, gloomy, one-room living that characterized the average vernacular home. Nevertheless, Arts and Crafts architects, unlike their Romantic predecessors, were interested in the interiors of vernacular buildings. They gained from these examples a source of inspiration, rather than historical models to copy, and demonstrated that looking to the traditions of the past could be a creative, rather than an imitative act.

Gibson's enthusiasm for the vernacular interior can be demonstrated by examining two specific examples of Lake District vernacular architecture, High Satterhow at Sawrey, and Townend in Troutbeck. His interest in the former building was recorded by Cowper in his guide to the parish of Hawkshead. When illustrating High Satterhow 'as showing a complete yeoman's house of apparently the early seventeenth century, with large additions, probably late in the same century', it is not only a photograph of the exterior, of the stone walling and mullioned windows, that accompanies the description, but also a ground plan of the house.<sup>55</sup> Cowper takes the reader through the plan of the building section by section noting features such as the 'house-place', the newel stair, and the partition made of lath and plaster and oak planks. A footnote reveals that 'The plan is kindly supplied by Mr Dan Gibson, of Marley Lodge, Windermere', demonstrating that the vernacular interior was the domain, not only of the antiquarian and the historian, but also of the practising architect.<sup>56</sup>

It is likely that Gibson was also well aware of the interiors at another, more notable, Lakeland yeoman's farmhouse, Townend in Troutbeck (Figure 6.6), which drew the attention of antiquaries, writers and tourists at the end of the nineteenth century. Photographs of the farmhouse, including a range of interior views, were produced for sale and Gibson may have been among those who purchased a set.<sup>57</sup> Seven photographs of Townend have been found in the Gibson archive, alongside letters from Gibson to his mother and brother, indicating that Gibson may have been aware of this vernacular structure which had become a visitor attraction long before it was purchased, in 1947, by the National Trust.<sup>58</sup> The photograph of the State Bedroom in the Gibson archive is similar to the photograph which accompanied an article about 'Troutbeck Near Windermere' which appeared in the *North Lonsdale Magazine and Furness Miscellany* in February 1900. This article states that, the owner of Townend, 'Mr Browne is an antiquarian, an enthusiastic one, and he is always ready to show his house to those visitors who are able to appreciate the old carved furniture and the ancient books and curios which abound in it'.<sup>59</sup>

Gibson would certainly have appreciated the furniture and artefacts on display at Townend as, according to Simpson, he 'never appeared happier than when trying to unearth some beautiful thing from obscure and dusty corners'.<sup>60</sup> Gibson's correspondence with his brother John records the time he spent hunting out antiques and, both through descriptions and quick pen sketches, his eagerness to share the news of his latest finds. In an undated letter he informs his brother that, while in Preston, he had purchased four complete chairs and the back and legs of another six, and states, with the aid of an illustration, that 'curiously the day before I bought in Kendal an arm chair, without carving, with the same spread but with this tiny raised beading round the outer edges on the spread'.<sup>61</sup> Gibson's enthusiasm for local antiques combined with his close proximity to Troutbeck, living and working at Bowness and Windermere, means that he may well have entered the interiors of Townend.

Gibson was not interested in imitating or creating copies of the antiques and interiors he admired. He had a profound respect for the old work of the district, as Simpson's account reveals, 'Often when looking at an old example he would

say "Ah I shall never do anything so well as that" and I am sure that he meant it. He believed the best ancient examples can not be improved upon'. Yet this did not prevent him from looking to these old examples as a source of inspiration and Simpson notes that his instructions to create a piece of furniture or carry out a panel of woodcarving 'were often accompanied by reference to some ancient example from his sketchbooks or in some special work on the subject'.<sup>62</sup> There was a fine line between being inspired by vernacular examples and the creation of a fake, and this line was sometimes crossed in turn-of-the-century Lakeland.

Gibson's reverential approach to the furnishings of the traditional Lakeland cottage, regarding them as a source of inspiration rather than a model for imitation, contrasts with the approach of George Browne, the owner of the cottage at Troutbeck. The photographs of Townend show interiors decorated with heavy oak furnishings and every oak surface is decorated, carved with a profusion of dates, initials, arms, scrollwork and other devices. However, although the oldest part of the building originates from the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century and many of the pieces were family heirlooms which had been passed down the generations, the majority of the carving does not have such ancient origins.<sup>63</sup> As S. H. Scott observes in his book *A Westmorland Village*, dedicated to George Browne, 'Not all the oak furniture at Townend, however, is old, for Mr Browne has carried on the traditions of the old Westmorland craftsman and has added furniture of his own handiwork to the treasures which he has inherited'.<sup>64</sup> The furniture which George Browne created was described by the *North Lonsdale Magazine* as 'cleverly executed imitations of old carved work' and was, significantly, followed by a discussion of his daughter's participation in the local craft revival, her practice of sending yarn to The Spinnery at Bowness and embroidering the linen which was returned.<sup>65</sup> George Browne could be regarded as both naturally continuing local traditions and self-consciously reviving them but there was little, apart from the spirit in which they were carried out, separating these 'cleverly executed imitations' and the creation of fakes.

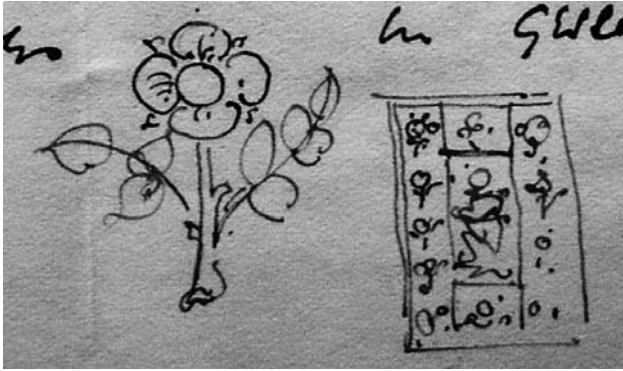
By adding old dates to new furniture and new carving to old furniture, Browne came close, much closer than Gibson, to the fakery that Cowper observed among turn-of-the-century dealers in the Lake District. Motivated by monetary gain, in contrast to the antiquarian enthusiasm that fuelled Browne's work, the dealers who were 'not content with buying up and selling out of the district really good examples' of old oak furniture, 'purchase the rougher made, the dilapidated, or the uncarved pieces, and "fettle" them up into totally alien forms, carving and dating them with ancient dates and initials'.<sup>66</sup> Cowper noted that 'the most fabulous and idiotic prices' were given for these fabrications by the wealthy Manchester 'offcomes', who build their villas round Windermere, and wish to "'sport their oak" in true old English style'.<sup>67</sup>

Gibson was responsible for designing such 'villas round Windermere' for wealthy men from Manchester and Liverpool and encouraged the incorporation of old oak furniture within the interiors. A description in Mawson's autobiography confirms that Gibson collected 'china, furniture, silver, pewter, tapestries, prints and miniatures, and every other imaginable artistic antique' for their clients.<sup>68</sup> But, the furnishings that Gibson created to sit alongside these pieces of old oak furniture aimed

to complement rather than replicate the traditional examples. The two presses that Gibson designed for the dining room at Dawstone exemplify his approach to modern furniture. Designed specifically for the recesses either side of the dining room's folding doors and constructed out of oak, the simplicity and austerity of their clean lines and sturdy proportions is relieved by the delicate carving of the small friezes. Weaver observed, when examining the furniture Gibson designed for Dawstone, 'the obvious harmony between the new pieces of his devising and the old examples which served to inspire him. While his are in no sense copies, they belong to the same family'.<sup>69</sup> This family resemblance between the oak presses at Dawstone and older examples is achieved through Gibson's choice of materials, simplicity of design and the quality of craftsmanship and construction, without false dates and initials or imitative decoration being carved across their surfaces.

Both the object of inspiration and the modern work it inspired are evident within the interiors of Birket Houses. The feature that characterizes these interiors, and the hall at Dawstone, is the rich oak panelling which lines the walls of the living hall, dining room and billiard room. The oak panelling, in its simplest form, has local precedents in the larger farmhouses and old halls of the region. At Birket Houses the panelling of the living hall is simply treated, in what Weaver deemed 'the Jacobean fashion', divided into framed rectangular panels and finished by the precise wooden teeth of the dentil detailing running beneath the wooden cornice.<sup>70</sup> Only a small portion of the panelling incorporates the distinctive Lakeland decoration of rosettes, lozenges and scrollwork. This decorated panelling bears similarities with the carved oak bread cupboard, dated 1715, at the Common Farm, Windermere, and with the carved panel from 1686 which Cowper illustrated in his guide to Hawkshead. There is a similar use of bold, simple rosette motifs placed at the centre of circles and surrounded by several curving parallel lines that are repeated in the scrollwork borders. The similarity of motifs combined with the carving technique, shallow incised lines that have been carried out relatively crudely leaving the marks of the tools upon the surface of the wood, makes it seem likely that this decorative panel at Birket Houses was an older piece that was inserted into the new interior. This panel serves to highlight the vernacular source of the rosette motif that was reinterpreted and repeated, in wood and plasterwork throughout Gibson's domestic designs.

One of the earliest recorded instances of Gibson's use of the rosette motif appears in a letter to his brother John from December 1895.<sup>71</sup> Gibson writes that he was having two picture frames made for the Edward Burne-Jones photographs he had purchased in London. The frames were to be made of oak and stained a 'dull sagey green' with little raised flowers created from a 'medium' that had been sent to Gibson from C. R. Ashbee of the Guild and School of Handicraft. A quick sketch accompanies his description of the frames, showing the single flower spray with a simplified rosette on a leafy stem which would be repeated around the frame's border (Figure 6.8). The rosette motif became almost a trademark for Gibson and this meant that even after his death in 1907 it continued to be associated with his name. Simpson designed and carried out a memorial bookcase to hold the chained books and pewter flagon in St Martin's Church in Bowness. This modest oak bookcase had a small brass plaque proclaiming the fact that it was placed in the



6.8  
Flower motif  
and design for  
a picture frame  
in a letter from  
Dan Gibson to  
John Gibson,  
6 December  
1895.

church 'In memory of the late Dan Gibson by some of his friends, 1907'. Yet, anyone familiar with Gibson's decorative designs would not have needed the plaque to make the connection with Gibson's name, as the carved border on which the plaque was placed consisted of rosette motifs with scrolling stems and leaves. In the interiors of Birket Houses and Dawstone both these variations of the rosette motif appear in the plasterwork. In the dining room at Birket Houses the plasterwork ceiling has single rosettes on leafy stems as decorative corner devices, while in the library at Dawstone the plasterwork cornice has a scrolling pattern of rosettes, stems and leaves which is similar in appearance to the carved border of the memorial bookcase.

Arts and Crafts architects, by using the vernacular as a source of inspiration and abstracting traditional motifs, were able to create new interiors. This mode of working is closely aligned to the methods of the traditional Lake District craftsman as described by Cowper: 'It looks as if the workman, while generally producing certain traditional ornament patterns, executed them from his memory and imagination, and not from another panel which was lying before him'.<sup>72</sup> Cowper glimpsed the potential of the vernacular method to be a generative and a creative process, rather than just the replication of established forms. He predicted the theories of recent vernacular studies. For example, Thomas Hubka, in his article 'Just Folks Designing: Vernacular Designers and the Generation of Form', seeking to establish the intellectual processes involved in the vernacular, explains that within a practice dominated by tradition vernacular architects did more than merely copy old forms: 'The folk designer accomplishes change by reordering the hierarchy of ideas (schemata) contained within the known grammar of tradition of existing structures'.<sup>73</sup> Cowper's comment demonstrates that at the close of the nineteenth century, alongside the myth of the unselfconscious vernacular builder, there were other interpretations of vernacular working methods, methods that were echoed in the practice of the Arts and Crafts architect.

### Changing views: protecting the Lake District landscape

Despite the Arts and Crafts interest in the furnishings and fittings of vernacular buildings, for some turn-of-the-century critics the nature of a house's interior was of little consequence. Collingwood, in his history of the Lake District, recalled Wordsworth's

advice when he wrote that 'there is plenty of room for extension if they would only keep to the ancient type and build houses externally like the old ones, however completely modernised in the interiors'.<sup>74</sup> Wordsworth and Collingwood advocated vernacular building traditions as a means of blending the exteriors of modern houses into their natural context, the outstandingly beautiful scenery of the Lake District.

Wordsworth's position as a returning native imbued him with both the in-depth understanding and outside perspective necessary to account for the changes taking place in the region. It was his guidebook that first warned against the loss of the vernacular building tradition in the face of modern, imported fashions. He asked,

why should the genius that directed the ancient architecture of these vales have deserted them? For the bridges, churches, mansions, cottages, and their richly fringed and flat-roofed outhouses, venerable as the grange of some old abbey, have been substituted by structures, in which baldness only seems to have been studied, or plans of the most vulgar utility.<sup>75</sup>

These fears mounted as the century progressed. Cowper was struck by 'the absolute change in rural life, even in remote districts, since the commencement of the present century', observing that,

Of course, we continually meet survivals, often very remarkable ones, of most primitive usages and appliances. These are . . . evidences of the 'past in the present', but taking a broad view, it is sheer nonsense to talk of 'the old country life' as still extant.<sup>76</sup>

The railway lines, which opened up the once-isolated region, transported more than the view-seeking tourists into the Lake District. They brought with them an outside perspective, a new appreciation of vernacular buildings that had previously been taken for granted, but also new materials and architectural fashions that would threaten traditional building methods and, in turn, threaten the appearance of the Lake District landscape as a whole.

The issue of how to build in a place of outstanding natural beauty without defacing the landscape gave impetus to the vernacular revival in the Lake District. Emphasis was placed on the use of indigenous materials, as is seen in Cowper's criticism of newly built houses such as Pullwoods. Although he sees Pullwoods as being a 'distinctly beautiful building', he believes that 'styles in which wrong or unlocal materials are made use of are eccentric, and buildings in such styles can never be in real harmony with the country, though they may be of merit as buildings'.<sup>77</sup> The house, designed by G. Faulkner Armitage in 1890 for the north-western shore of Lake Windermere, adheres, not to the traditions of the Lake District, but to the black-and-white half-timbered Cheshire vernacular and, with its terracotta-coloured plasterwork, certainly appears alien to the Lake District landscape.

The aim to harmonize with the Lake District landscape is particularly evident in the houses Gibson and Mawson created for the Heathwaite area of



Windermere town. In 1897 the Gibson and Mawson partnership produced a plan of an estate at Heathwaite, Windermere, that had been built for J. Nicholson, a house and estate agent at Bowness-on-Windermere. Mawson believed that, when laying-out building estates such as that at Heathwaite, 'the desired aim and object was to accomplish a worthy complement to pure air and pleasant surroundings without desecration and disfigurement; yielding pleasure to the beholder and profit to the proprietor'.<sup>78</sup> In aiming to make their buildings a complement to their surroundings, preserving the view, Gibson and Mawson wanted to improve upon the output of the average builder. In a letter to his brother John written in December 1895, Gibson reports that 'we have just started building 10 cottages up here. The local Jerry-builder I hear is raging because they are better looking and cheaper than his abortions. Ours are not bad little places but there is nothing to be jealous about'.<sup>79</sup> Mawson also believed that their designs had improved upon the work of the speculative builder, describing their work at Heathwaite as 'a few characteristic cottages' which 'in no way spoil the view, and are in any case very much better to look upon than the speculative buildings which might otherwise have marred the outlook'.<sup>80</sup> The Heathwaite houses, including The Corbels (Figure 6.1) and other properties designed for members of Mawson's family, were built in the distinctive architectural style of their practice which comprised round-arched openings, large sloping buttresses, rows of corbelling and, of course, white roughcast walls, Westmorland slate roofs and groups of tapered cylindrical chimneys, typical of the Lake District vernacular. By building good-quality houses, which were in sympathy with the surroundings, Mawson and Gibson believed they were protecting the landscape from more inappropriate developments.

In the Lake District planning advice published in the 1930s, the same insistence on the use of local materials and the characteristic features of the old buildings, central to the Arts and Crafts approach, is evident. A report upon the regional planning scheme written in 1930 by Robert M. Mattocks, on behalf of the Lake District South Regional Planning Committee, quotes directly Wordsworth's hope that 'skill and knowledge should prevent unnecessary deviations from that path of simplicity and beauty along which, without design and unconsciously, their humble predecessors have moved'.<sup>81</sup> The report promotes the theory of reticence, the view that architecture should be a subtle and harmonious element of the landscape, in its advice about new buildings. This subtlety could be achieved by using the same local materials that the Arts and Crafts architects had employed as 'buildings erected in the local stone and roofed with Westmorland slate are inconspicuous and at a distance blend so naturally into the landscape that they are almost invisible'.<sup>82</sup>

To help the public to create this 'subtle' and 'inconspicuous' architecture a Lake District Advisory Architectural Panel was set up and in 1936 published 'An Appeal to Those Intending to Build' on behalf of the Lake District Safeguarding Society. The Windermere representatives on this panel were the Arts and Crafts architect W. L. Dolman, who had worked as a partner in Gibson's practice since 1902 and took over the firm when Gibson died in 1907, and A. N. W. Hodgson, who had provided a perspective drawing of Shrublands, the Windermere house Mawson designed in 1902 for one of his brothers. It is fitting, therefore, that the panel echoed

Gibson's and Mawson's architectural approach, suggesting that 'the introduction of the characteristic features of our old buildings should be encouraged'.<sup>83</sup>

Both the Arts and Crafts architects and the planners of the 1930s, faced with the problem of how to build in a place of natural beauty, followed the advice of Wordsworth and Ruskin and sought their solutions in the vernacular buildings of the region. Describing the chimney stack 'finishing with a cylindrical drum slightly tapering to the top' as 'one of the most interesting features of the old building', the advisory panel highlighted the feature which had come to symbolize Lake District vernacular architecture.<sup>84</sup> The tapered cylindrical chimney was praised by Wordsworth and sketched by Ruskin and yet it was Gibson who went beyond the page, beyond the guidebook, sketchbook or unexecuted design, and transformed it, and the tapered columns it inspired, into 'one of the most interesting features' of the Arts and Crafts house in the Lake District.

## Acknowledgements

This chapter is based on PhD research carried out at the Courtauld Institute of Art and supported by a Doctoral Award from the Arts and Humanities Research Council. It has been made possible due to the generosity of the owners of Dawstone (Rhoda and Tony Graham) and the owner of Birket Houses, who allowed me to examine their homes, and the kindness of Dan Gibson's descendants, who enabled me to consult Gibson's letters and sketches, bringing a new dimension to my work.

## Notes

- 1 Thomas H. Mawson, 'The Unity of the House and Garden', *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects*, 9 (1902), pp. 357–78 (p. 363).
- 2 Thomas H. Mawson, *The Life and Work of an English Landscape Architect* (London, 1927), p. 63.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 William Wordsworth, *Guide to the Lakes*, ed. Ernest de Sélincourt (London, 2004).
- 5 John Ruskin, 'The Poetry of Architecture; or, The Architecture of the Nations of Europe Considered in its Association with Natural Scenery and National Character', in *The Works of John Ruskin*, eds E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 39 vols (London, 1903–12), I.
- 6 Thomas H. Mawson, 'In Memoriam: Dan Gibson – an Appreciation', *Architectural Association Journal*, 22 (1907), pp. 171–2 (p. 172).
- 7 These Arts and Crafts houses include Ashley Green (1906), by Percy Scott Worthington; Cragwood (1909), by Frank Dunkerley; and Keldwith (1910), by Herbert Luck North, and are discussed in detail in my PhD thesis 'The Arts and Crafts House in the Lake District' (Courtauld Institute of Art, 2010).
- 8 For a comparison of Broadleys and Blackwell see Wendy Hitchmough, 'Lake Poetry', *Architectural Review*, 193 (1993), pp. 72–8.
- 9 'House at Windermere: Entrance Front: M. H. Baillie Scott', *Architectural Review*, 7 (1900), p. 232.
- 10 Gertrude Jekyll and Lawrence Weaver, *Gardens for Small Country Houses* (London, 1912), p. 95.
- 11 Lawrence Weaver, *Small Country Houses of To-Day*, 2nd series (London, 1919), p. 56; Mawson, 'In Memoriam', p. 172.
- 12 Lawrence Weaver, 'The Lesser Country Houses of To-Day: Dawstone, Windermere', *Country Life* (October 1911), pp. 7\*–11\*; Weaver, *Small Country Houses of To-Day*, pp. 52–7.
- 13 Private collection of letters and documents relating to Dan Gibson.
- 14 S. H. Scott, *A Westmorland Village: The Story of the Old Homesteads and 'Statesman' Families of Troutbeck by Windermere* (London, 1904), p. 6.

- 15 Weaver, 'The Lesser Country Houses of To-Day: Dawstone', p 7\*.
- 16 Ibid., p. 8\*.
- 17 This comparison was aided by R. W. Brunskill's line drawings in *Vernacular Architecture of the Lake Counties: A Field Handbook* (London, 1974), pp. 41, 43. 'Statesmen' or 'estatesmen' farmers were those who held their land by a system of customary tenure which was similar to freehold.
- 18 Lawrence Weaver, 'The Lesser Country Houses of To-Day: Cragwood, Windermere', *Country Life* (August 1912), pp. 7\*–8\* (p. 7\*).
- 19 Brunskill, *Vernacular Architecture of the Lake Counties*, p. 42.
- 20 Henry Swainson Cowper, *Hawkshead: Its History, Archaeology, Industries, Folklore, Dialect* (London, 1899), p. 30.
- 21 Gibson's plans combine modern living requirements with the medieval concept of the hall, creating an open-plan living space at the heart of the home. The living halls at Dawstone and Birket Houses are not taken to the same extreme as the double-height hall, complete with minstrel's gallery, at Blackwell. However, it would be wrong to cast Gibson as the pragmatist and Baillie Scott as the idealist as Baillie Scott's plans were motivated by the practical desire to break away from compartmentalized plans and create a flexible living space suitable for modern informal lifestyles.
- 22 Weaver, *Small Country Houses of To-Day*, p. 57.
- 23 See, for example, Wendy Hitchmough's discussion of George Devey in C. F. A. Voysey (London, 1997), p. 20.
- 24 Ruskin, 'The Poetry of Architecture', p. 52.
- 25 William Morris, 'The Lesser Arts', in *Hopes and Fears for Art* (London, 1882), repr. in *William Morris: News from Nowhere and Other Writings*, ed. Clive Wilmer (London, 2004), p. 241.
- 26 J. D. Marshall and J. K. Walton, *The Lake Counties from 1830 to the Mid-Twentieth Century: A Study in Regional Change* (Manchester, 1981), p. 154.
- 27 W. G. Collingwood, *The Lake Counties* (London, 1902), p. 34.
- 28 Stephen Gill, *Wordsworth and the Victorians* (Oxford, 1998), p. 246.
- 29 Collingwood, *The Lake Counties*, p. 32.
- 30 Mawson, 'The Unity of the House and Garden', p. 363; R. W. Brunskill, in *Traditional Buildings of Cumbria: The County of the Lakes* (London, 2002), p. 155, attests to the fact that the use of the tapered cylindrical chimney stack rising from a square base was not that widespread in Lake District vernacular buildings.
- 31 Wordsworth, *Guide*, p. 71.
- 32 H. D. Rawnsley, *Lake Country Sketches* (Glasgow, 1903), pp. 19–20.
- 33 Angus Taylor, 'The Lowly Dwelling of William Wordsworth Esqre', *Georgian Group Journal*, 7 (1997), pp. 43–55 (p. 53). Unfortunately no evidence exists to confirm that Gibson saw the Webster design.
- 34 Peter Wright, *Cumbrian Dialect* (London, 1979), p. 20.
- 35 Robert Ferguson, *The Dialect of Cumberland with a Chapter on its Place-Names* (London, 1873).
- 36 Wendy Kaplan, 'Traditions Transformed: Romantic Nationalism in Design, 1890–1920', in *Designing Modernity: The Arts of Reform and Persuasion 1885–1945*, ed. Wendy Kaplan (London, 1995), p. 24.
- 37 Two recent studies of the Lake District craft revival are Sara E. Haslam, *John Ruskin and the Lakeland Arts Revival, 1880–1920* (Cardiff, 2004) and Jennie Brunton, *The Arts and Crafts Movement in the Lake District: A Social History* (Lancaster, 2001).
- 38 Cowper, *Hawkshead: Its History*, p. 300.
- 39 For a full account of H. D. Rawnsley's Keswick School of Industrial Art, see Ian Bruce, *The Loving Eye and Skilful Hand: The Keswick School of Industrial Arts* (Carlisle, 2001).
- 40 H. D. Rawnsley, *Ruskin and the English Lakes* (Glasgow, 1901), p. 146.
- 41 Cumbria Record Office, Kendal, WDX 515, Simpson Archive, Gillhead Record Book, 1893–1911. See also, Eleanor Davidson, *The Simpsons of Kendal – Craftsmen in Wood 1885–1952* (Lancaster, 1978).

- 42 Account of Dan Gibson by Arthur W. Simpson, the Handicrafts, Kendal, addressed to Mr Ward. Private collection.
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 'A Garden Designer's House and Offices', *Builders' Journal and Architectural Record* (December 1899), p. 269.
- 45 Cumbria Record Office, Kendal, WDX 515, Simpson Archive, 'Photographs of Furniture from the Arts and Crafts Exhibition by Arthur W. Simpson', press cutting from *Building News* (October 1899).
- 46 Letter from Dan Gibson to his brother John Gibson, written from Windermere, 6 December 1895. Private collection. The catalogue of the Seventh Exhibition of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society (London, 1903) includes an entry on p. 97 for an 'oak sideboard with inlay exhibited by Arthur Simpson, Designed by Dan Gibson'.
- 47 W. G. Collingwood, *Lake District History* (Kendal, 1925), p. 142.
- 48 'Church Art in Westmorland', *Magazine of Art* (April 1899), pp. 280–2.
- 49 Letter from Dan Gibson to his mother, written from Windermere, 12 April 1906. Private collection.
- 50 'Death of Mr Dan Gibson: Touching Tribute at the Funeral', *Lakes Chronicle*, 26 June 1907, p. 5.
- 51 Mawson, 'In Memoriam', p. 172.
- 52 H. D. Rawnsley noted that, despite celebrating the character of the peasants in his poetry and occupying his own Westmorland cottage, Wordsworth lived 'separate and apart from them, so seldom entered the "huts where poor men lie"'. Rawnsley, *Lake Country Sketches*, p. 4.
- 53 Wordsworth, *Guide*, p. 81.
- 54 Alan Crawford, 'Englishness in Arts and Crafts Architecture', in *Architecture and Englishness 1880–1914*, eds David Crellin and Ian Dungavell (Oxford, 2006), pp. 25–36.
- 55 Cowper, *Hawkshead: Its History*, p. 151.
- 56 Ibid.
- 57 For further discussion of Townend, Troutbeck, as an early example of a heritage attraction see Sydney T. Chapman, 'The Past and the Recent Past: Pioneering Perspectives in Victorian Lakeland' (MPhil thesis, University of Manchester, 1998), pp. 90–1.
- 58 Private collection.
- 59 Roby X, 'Troutbeck Near Windermere, Part 1', *North Lonsdale Magazine and Furness Miscellany*, 3 (1900), pp. 233–9 and 255–60 (p. 236).
- 60 Account of Gibson by Simpson.
- 61 Extract from a letter written by Dan Gibson, undated. Private collection.
- 62 Account of Gibson by Simpson.
- 63 For a more detailed description of the property see the National Trust guidebook, *Townend*, with text by Sarah Woodcock (London, 2005).
- 64 Scott, *A Westmorland Village*, p. 69.
- 65 Roby X, 'Troutbeck', p. 237. The Spinnery at Bowness-on-Windermere was set up by Annie Garnett in the early 1890s; see Brunton, *The Arts and Crafts Movement in the Lake District*, pp. 121–53.
- 66 Cowper, *Hawkshead*, p. 181.
- 67 Ibid.
- 68 Mawson, *Life and Work*, p. 45.
- 69 Weaver, 'The Lesser Country Houses of To-Day: Dawstone', p. 11\*.
- 70 Weaver, *Small Country Houses of To-Day*, p. 52.
- 71 Letter from Gibson to his brother, 1895.
- 72 Cowper, *Hawkshead: Its History*, p. 299.
- 73 Thomas Hubka, 'Just Folks Designing: Vernacular Designers and the Generation of Form', *Journal of Architectural Education*, 32 (1979), pp. 27–9 (p. 29).
- 74 Collingwood, *Lake District History*, p. 141.
- 75 Wordsworth, *Guide*, p. 72.
- 76 Cowper, *Hawkshead: Its History*, p. 176.

**E. Whittaker**

77 Ibid., p. 44.

78 Thomas H. Mawson, 'Small Gardens', *Builders' Journal and Architectural Record* (March 1901), pp. 92–8 (p. 92).

79 Letter from Gibson to his brother, 1895.

80 Thomas H. Mawson, *The Art and Craft of Garden Making* (London, 1900), p. 175.

81 Robert H. Mattocks, 'The Lake District (South) Regional Planning Committee: Report upon the Survey and the Regional Planning Scheme' (Kendal, 1930), p. 2.

82 Ibid., p. 16.

83 Lake District Advisory Architectural Panel, *An Appeal to Those Intending to Build* (1936), transcript in the British Library.

84 Ibid.

## Chapter 7

# Tudoresque Vernacular and the Self-Reliant Englishman

*Andrew Ballantyne and Andrew Law*

### Introduction

'Why are you, or perhaps your neighbours, living in an imitation Tudor house with stained wooden slats shoved on to the front of it to make it look like what is called a half-timbered house?' asked John Gloag in 1934. He pointed out that the house had been built quite differently from a real Tudor house, and that the slats in the new house had nothing to do with its construction. 'Why', he wondered, 'do we live in this sort of half-baked pageant, always hiding in the clothes of another age?'<sup>1</sup> There were two reasons for his attack. One was that he, along with many intellectuals who gave thought to the matter, saw the 'imitation Tudor' of the 1920s and 1930s as kitsch.<sup>2</sup> It did not express the truth about its means of construction, and therefore was not serious architecture. The second reason was that such buildings, which we here identify as Tudoresque, were normal at the time. They were everywhere. It is this that makes them interesting for us, and what impelled Gloag to denounce them, rather than ignore them. There was a surprising consensus against them among architectural intellectuals, and those of us who learnt about twentieth-century architecture in Britain from books published during the 1930s through to the 1980s have all been taught that these buildings are wrong and bad. In this chapter we will sidestep the issue of quality; instead of querying their merit we will ask why there was such a demand for Tudoresque houses. At a popular level, in 'vernacular' taste, it seemed to be a very good idea to imitate Tudor buildings, as is evident not only in the abundance of buildings that survive from that time, but also in the journals of the period, especially those that were aimed at a popular readership, rather than the architectural profession.<sup>3</sup> In order to understand why Tudoresque buildings seemed to be such a good idea at the time, we need to trace various cultural impulses across a wider terrain than simply the history of earlier buildings.

However, we should start by noticing that these buildings do have

a conventional architectural history: they are not without precedent. Popular Tudoresque buildings from the 1920s and 1930s are usually labelled as 'Mock Tudor', whereas if they are a little older they are given a different name and are thought about in quite a different way. Comparable buildings from the 1860s and 1870s tend to be called 'Old English', and associated with the Arts and Crafts movement of the later nineteenth century. They often made use of distinctly Tudoresque elements, but the allusive character of that aspect of their work is not mentioned in the literature. The difference is that the Arts and Crafts buildings did not fall foul of at least some of the complaints listed by Gloag. The buildings did express their means of construction: their timbers are structural, or at least plausible evocations of structural timbers, whereas the Mock-Tudor timbers of the 1930s are indeed purely notional and symbolic, as Gloag said. Therefore the Arts and Crafts architects have come to be seen as serious architects and have been enlisted as pioneers of modernism,<sup>4</sup> despite the fact that their influence is much more pervasive in the undistinguished popular architecture of the suburbs. The stylistic continuity is usually overlooked because the Mock Tudor is treated as an unacknowledged bastard, generally disparaged or ignored in the architectural and scholarly literature. The buildings of the suburbs have had popular appeal, as the range of publications about them attests, but it is only in recent years that the flow of academic articles has begun to increase beyond the occasional work.<sup>5</sup> It remains critically uncontentious to ignore inter-war suburban Tudor or to see it as 'debased',<sup>6</sup> and anyone in a school of architecture who shows an interest in it is in danger of being seen to have made a questionable judgement, as it seems not to lead towards a better understanding of the necessary high ground of modernity. Nevertheless, popular appreciations aside, there are exceptions, such as Gavin Stamp's recent paper 'Neo-Tudor and its Enemies', which argues for this architecture to be taken seriously and suggests that there are fine under-appreciated buildings in the style.<sup>7</sup> Lee Goff's study of Tudoresque architecture in the USA also takes an overview of high-quality buildings, and there are now monographs on individual Tudoresque buildings, as well as good local-history studies that include appreciations of Tudoresque buildings.<sup>8</sup> As publications seem to be appearing with increasing frequency and connecting with the wider world of popular publishing, there is every likelihood that we will be hearing more in the future.

Revived Tudor architecture goes back as far as the later eighteenth century. Stamp links it with the revived interest in Shakespeare and his elevation by David Garrick and Samuel Johnson to the status of the national genius.<sup>9</sup> However, the late eighteenth-century enthusiasm for the picturesque was also crucial in this revival. The first use of a Tudor-style building as something old-fashioned that was supposed to influence modern architectural taste was in Thomas Hearne's illustration depicting an exemplary Picturesque landscape in Richard Payne Knight's poem *The Landscape* of 1794.<sup>10</sup> The Tudor does duty as an old-English style not only there, but also in the Picturesque pattern books that were produced in the following two decades.<sup>11</sup> It is this link with the Picturesque that leads us to prefer the term 'Tudoresque' for architecture that associates itself, sometimes only rather notionally, with the Tudor. Stamp also deals with Victorian aspects of this architecture and correctly re-establishes links between buildings that had been separated out into 'Old

English' and 'Arts and Crafts' styles. Stylistically the connections are easily seen, providing that one has not blinded oneself by having come to believe in the autonomy of the stylistic categories of earlier generations. A building can belong to the Arts and Crafts movement and at the same time be Tudoresque, as some of M. H. Baillie Scott's designs clearly show. It is not a question of fitting into one category to the exclusion of the other. The Tudor style is designated by the building's formal allusions, whereas the Arts and Crafts movement's priority was the promotion of an ethos of craftsmanship, and the two are not incompatible.

There is also a vital connection between these buildings and a wider culture, especially in the twentieth-century inter-war period in England, where the Tudoresque celebrates continuity with the past, rather than repudiating it. This iconography of suburban dwellings of the 1930s was the particular forte of *Dunroamin: The Suburban Semi and its Enemies*, a polemic of 1981 that took an anthropological look at the buildings.<sup>12</sup> The black-and-white Tudoresque style originates in the cottage architecture of the pre-modern world that is evoked so successfully in Oliver Goldsmith's ever-popular poem *The Deserted Village*:

Sweet Auburn! loveliest village of the plain,  
Where health and plenty cheer'd the labouring swain,  
Where smiling spring its earliest visit paid,  
And parting summer's lingering blooms delay'd:

Goldsmith itemizes the village's simple activities and charms, and concludes the opening stanza by regretting their loss:

These were thy charms sweet village! sports like these,  
With sweet succession, taught e'en toil to please;  
These round thy bowers their cheerful influence shed,  
These were thy charms – but all these charms are fled.

In 1770, when Goldsmith was writing, most villages would have had a pre-Georgian character – as if in some sort of old-English 'style', such as would be realized a generation later by John Nash at Blaise Hamlet (Figure 7.1). This nostalgia for a vanished past, an imagined 'golden age' of simplicity and contentment, is still with us and shows no sign of diminishing. Indeed, it can attach to an ever-wider range of building styles. In twenty-first-century Britain there is popular appreciation not only of the styles that looked old-fashioned in Goldsmith's day, but also of the Georgian buildings that were the outriders of Goldsmith's modernity, of revivalist versions of those buildings (Neo-Georgian) and of the mid-century modernism of the 1950s and 1960s (now popularly known as 'Retro').

Tudoresque architecture is not usually very specific in its references, but it is a well-established way of signalling the 'old fashioned', and that has been its role for as long as it has been in play. It connects with a culture that relishes traditional aspects of Englishness, in a way that is not rigorously programmatic or codified, but which is evident in traditional pubs and tea shops, in copper kettles and dark-oak





7.1  
Blaise Hamlet,  
double cottage,  
1811, John  
Nash, architect.  
Photographed  
c.1944.

furniture, in fine china and chintzes decorated with flowers. It is unclear how we learnt to value these things, and if we have had a design education then we have probably learnt to disparage them. The historical sense of this culture is exposed to view most clearly in Edward German's immensely popular operetta *Merrie England* (1902) which has some claim to being the twentieth century's most-performed dramatic work in England, on account of the plethora of amateur performances that seem to have been put on in every village hall as a patriotic duty between the 1920s and 1950s. Its music is trite, its wit laboured, and the plot straightforwardly sentimental, but it clearly hit home as patriotic entertainment. The characters include happy peasants, Queen Elizabeth I (Good Queen Bess), Sir Walter Raleigh and Robin Hood. The musical numbers include 'The Yeomen of England', 'O Peaceful England' and 'The English Rose'. It is heroically unafraid of cliché. The operetta did not create the vision of an Elizabethan 'golden age' that it projects, rather it expressed something that was already in the culture. The patriotism to which German and his librettist Basil Hood gave expression in 1902 was that of England as the great imperial power, nostalgically connected to the supposed social, economic and political success of the Elizabethan period. The message took on greater urgency in the contexts of the prosecution of both world wars and imperial decline. Its Elizabethan theme was given renewed impetus with the accession of a new Elizabeth as queen in 1952. Part of the reason for the general prevalence of Tudoresque architecture in the mid-twentieth century, and for its continuing popularity today, is that it has wide cultural ramifications. It is part of various different histories, and it is this multiplicity that makes it perennial and apparently indestructible. Its foundations are more mythic than historical, and so are not to be undermined. The architecture started to find its way into the world under the aegis of the Picturesque, but gave expression to ideas that had been forming gradually from the late seventeenth century, and then turned into one of the traditional ways to designate Englishness in architecture.

This chapter looks at a few of these ideas in relation to one of the many narratives that intersect in the Tudoresque, the self-image of the Englishman as self-reliant – however open to doubt and criticism that image might be. It should be stressed here that it cannot be our aim to be exhaustive, as there is far more supportive evidence than we can present, and so we are sampling a variety of sources and examples so as to shed light on this aspect of the subject from different directions.<sup>13</sup> When we are asserting that an idea is in circulation, we take it as axiomatic that the idea is adequately shown to be in circulation when it has been set down in writing. The idea that is expressed may be confused or historically wrong, but it was certainly in the air. Just as *Merrie England* could mobilize images that made sense to its audience despite being hopeless as academic history, so, when we are dealing with something as intangible as the meaning associated with buildings, and when the meanings in question are the ‘vernacular’ meanings for the people who have not been inculcated with the values and critical apparatus of the architectural profession, the writings are exact testimony to the presence of those ideas in at least a part of the population.

Where the Tudoresque is concerned, there are various stories to be told, and some of them can be traced across many years, but the attitudes involved might not be continuous. It is possible, for example, for the idea of patriotism to be associated with the style at some moments more than at others, while on other occasions the idea of independence might come to the fore. Architectural meanings can shift without a building changing. We are trying to grasp some of those less tangible aspects of a large set of commonplace buildings.<sup>14</sup>

Our anchor for this chapter is the everyday black-and-white houses of the 1920s and 1930s. Even taking a narrow theme and tracing it discontinuously produces a wealth of material that has a bearing on understanding these houses. Their stylistic roots, as mentioned above, go back to the late eighteenth century, for example in the designs that accompanied *An Essay on British Cottage Architecture* (1798) by James Malton. He called their style ‘old English’, and they look strikingly like houses that were built in the 1920s and 1930s in England’s hastily developed suburbs (Figure 7.2). Malton’s cottages were designed in the wartime aftermath of the French Revolution as agricultural workers’ dwellings to be built by landowning employers who were being enjoined by the newly constituted Board of Agriculture to improve the dreadful state of their housing stock as a way of avoiding social unrest.<sup>15</sup> His designs were for modest but relatively well-appointed cottages for the kinds of people who might have thought it worth the effort to revolt, had their lot not improved.

In this chapter we are not tracing the whole development of the Tudoresque, but simply looking for moments that illuminate the origins of key aspects of the style. The general arc of development takes us to George Devey (1820–86) who adapted this cottage style for large aristocratic houses as well as for smaller buildings on their estates, as, for example, at Ascott, Buckinghamshire, for Leopold de Rothschild (Figure 7.3). Devey’s younger contemporaries, Norman Shaw and Eden Nesfield, admired his work and their Old English style was influential in the Arts and Crafts movement (Figure 7.4), which coloured the design of a



7.2  
James Malton,  
plate from  
*British Cottage  
Architecture*,  
1798.

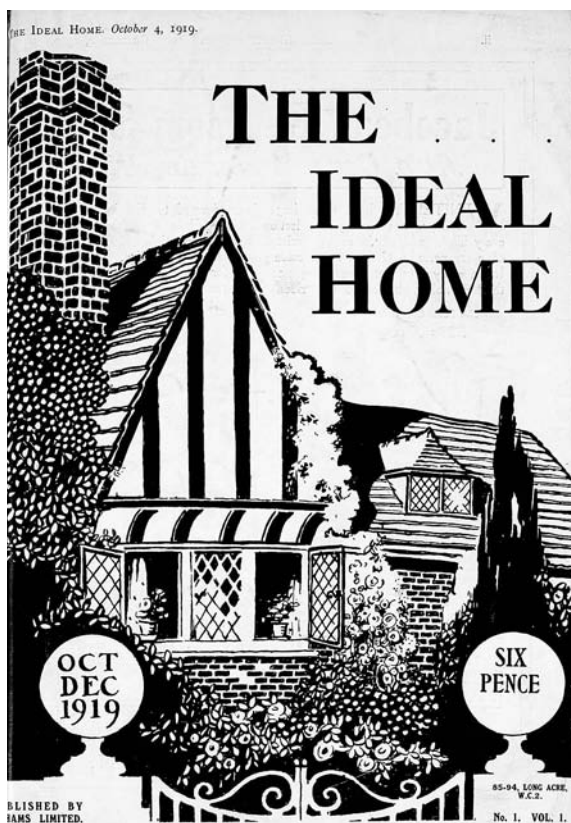
great many houses for the prosperous middle classes. While some of these designs undoubtedly aspired to evoke the qualities of houses by fine architects, others had a quite different aim, and made reference to the small-scale comforts of the cottage. By the 1920s this 'magpie' style had become particularly popular for suburban dwellings, as is evident from the pages of the *Ideal Home*, ranging from the socially pretentious 'Stockbroker's Tudor' house, to use Osbert Lancaster's term,<sup>16</sup> to the delight in miniature that is evident in the little suburban cottage that decorated its first front cover (Figure 7.5).



7.3  
Ascott House,  
Buckinghamshire,  
1874, George  
Devey, architect.  
Undated  
photograph.

7.4

Cragside,  
Northumberland,  
1870–85, Richard  
Norman Shaw,  
architect.  
Photographed in  
1976.



7.5

*The Ideal Home*  
magazine  
cover, October–  
December 1919.

## Independence

The British famously like to see themselves as independent and reluctant to answer to a foreign power. This perception has roots in Tudor history. In the mid-eighteenth century David Hume saw Henry Tudor's victory at the Battle of Bosworth as the event that marked the threshold of the modern era.<sup>17</sup> Henry VII was celebrated as the first British monarch of British stock since 1066. British independence was seen as definitively asserted in Henry VIII's break with the Roman church, and with Elizabeth's naval confrontations with Spain. In England the medieval condition of serfdom had waned, and it was understood that the last remaining serfs were set free by Elizabeth.<sup>18</sup> A sense of personal and national independence had been turned into an enduring popular anthem in the 1740s, after Thomas Arne set to music James Thomson's *Rule, Britannia!*, with its repeated declaration that 'Britons never will be slaves'.<sup>19</sup> A pre-condition for the rise of such sentiments was the Glorious Revolution of 1688, which Hume used as the end-stop for his history, along with the Bill of Rights of 1689. These events have recently been reinterpreted as crucial developments in forming the mindset that would eventually produce Britain's inter-war suburbs, with particular weight given to the thought of John Locke.<sup>20</sup> 'Every man', Locke said, 'has a *Property* in his own *Person*. This no Body has any Right to but himself'.<sup>21</sup> This simply repudiates serfdom, but elsewhere Locke argues for a more ancient conception of property:

As much land as a man tills, plants, improves, cultivates, and can use the product of, so much is his property. He by his labour does, as it were, inclose it from the common. Nor will it invalidate his right, to say every body else has an equal title to it; and therefore he cannot appropriate, he cannot inclose, without the consent of all his fellow-commoners, all mankind.<sup>22</sup>

Locke describes not so much a right to 'own' land as a right to work it, and to benefit from that work. His outlook is predicated on the assumption that there is more land to be had than people could work, so it is described as if it were an infinite resource. In this perspective all land was once common land, and would revert to being common land if people lost interest in working it. Every man has a right to use as much land as he can, so long as others consent to it.

However, this view was contentious, as common land was regularly annexed by Acts of Parliament for the benefit of landowners (who were often also Members of Parliament). As the number of Acts of enclosure increased through the eighteenth century the problems that came with managing enclosed land were also addressed, for example by agricultural improvers such as Nathaniel Kent (who published his *Hints to Gentlemen of Landed Property* in 1775) and the Board of Agriculture, which was established in 1790.<sup>23</sup> Although the Board was principally concerned with the management of enclosed land, there were some voices on it that expressed disquiet, seeing the loss of a traditional country life where the peasant had the right to a small piece of land. Given the Board's Whiggish enthusiasm for progress, and for increasing the productivity of enclosed land (a benefit for the

nation, not just the landowner), on this issue Tories and radicals found themselves in agreement. They turned to the Elizabethan period to support their ideas, reinterpreting the Land Act of 1589, arguing (inaccurately) that, while Elizabeth's governments had accepted enclosed land, they had always tempered the consequent problems by allowing peasants to keep a minimum of four acres of land and a cow, to produce enough for their own subsistence along with a modest surplus.<sup>24</sup> The Board of Agriculture and others with an aristocratic outlook thought it appropriate that the enclosures of their own period could be similarly tempered by allowing the peasantry a few acres of land for its own use, even though enclosed land had become the norm. They sought in this way to uphold what they saw as a long-standing tradition of the peasant's relation with the land – a tradition that could be maintained in a new rural economy that favoured large-scale production on enclosed land over traditional methods. They also advocated the building of cottages, something regarded as crucial to the spirit of the Act of 1589, so that the peasant could live next to his means of subsistence. This was convenient and practical, but also had good effects on the peasant's character. It encouraged habits of industry and self-reliance and gave him a stake in the country, which he would then fight to defend. The agricultural improver Lord Brownlow wrote to Sir John Sinclair, who chaired the Board of Agriculture, to say that he was a 'great advocate for grassland, with a comfortable house to a cottager, as the labourer then becomes attached to the spot and interested in the peace and welfare of the country'.<sup>25</sup>

In the 1790s, against the background of war with revolutionary France and anxieties about sedition and civil unrest in Britain, the building of cottages to improve the living conditions of the rural labourer was seen as crucial to engaging the peasant's identification of his own interests with the state's. Architects who published pattern books developed 'English' cottage designs that were calculated to appeal to the landowning clients who were being called on by the Board of Agriculture to build the cottages. Most of the designs are generically 'Old English' in style, some, like Malton's, giving the vision of Old England a specifically Tudoresque quality (Figure 7.2). Malton, as one would expect, commended his 'British cottage' designs as fostering a spirit of self-reliance, arguing that the nation's cottagers were better placed than the masters of stately homes to be capable of virile independent action:

When we consider the master [of a stately home] as mere man, there is found no consistency between the possessor and the thing possessed: the immensity of his demands, the attention he must necessarily exact of others, and a continual reliance upon them for the support of his dignity, more immediately renders him the dependant, than the lord of his servants.<sup>26</sup>

Far from espousing radicalism, Malton was arguing for the building of cottages as a way to avoid revolution. It would be the immense extravagance of the stately home that might provoke a dispossessed peasantry to revolt, so a showy mansion was not to be encouraged, whereas a well-housed peasantry would bring real contentment

and consequent political stability. The desire to give the worker a stake in the land and therefore a reason to fight for the status quo was introduced into political discussion by Edmund Burke in 1790.<sup>27</sup> The promotion of domestic contentment among agricultural workers had political urgency. A plot of land sufficient to allow a labourer and his family to subsist – a few acres and a cow – would give him dignity, self-respect and a stake in the country that he would then instinctively fight to defend. What mattered politically was the existence of these buildings, regardless of style. But so far as developments in architecture were concerned, the buildings were presented not as a rush into some brave new world of modernity, such as a revolution might bring, but as a continuance or revival of an old way of doing things that restored an old but vital contract between the agricultural worker and the land. The ‘Golden Age of the cottager’ was when the nation was at its strongest, with victories against Continental neighbours – the time when the degradations of feudalism were finally swept away by the Land Act of 1589. It was the age of Elizabeth.

This ideology remained important in nineteenth-century politics, especially for Gladstone’s Liberal party, which won the 1880 election by holding out the prospect of ‘three acres and a cow’. Samuel Smiles’s book *Self-Help* – a manifesto for self-reliance – had been a runaway bestseller.<sup>28</sup> We will not dwell on that now – our argument does not depend on the historical continuity of the idea. Our focus is the idea of self-reliance in the inter-war suburb, and in this section we have shown how the idea of self-reliance was deliberately cultivated and promoted for the good of the country, and how it was associated with an old England that was somehow personified in Elizabeth.

### Individualism after 1918

A comparable mood is again to be found in political discussion in the 1920s. Housebuilding was promoted, and the reasons given were much the same as those given at the end of the eighteenth century, making a similar analysis of the national character of ‘the people’, though by this time the largest groups of workers in need of housing were no longer farm labourers. In the aftermath of the First World War there were dramatic social and economic changes that produced tensions and discontents that again needed to be directed away from the example of a foreign revolution.<sup>29</sup> A population of 45 million had lost nearly one million to the war, nearly all young men. Victorian industries were in decline, but even though a great number of working- and middle-class jobs were under threat, there was growth for a new generation in new occupations, with new living standards, rising wages and new expectations.<sup>30</sup> For example, the distribution of electrical power made it possible for industry to be located much more flexibly than before the war, instead of having to be within reach of coalfields.<sup>31</sup> Electricity was important also in relation to new uses, including for domestic appliances: vacuum cleaners, refrigerators, cookers, gramophones and radios.<sup>32</sup> The motor car became more widely available, and new industrial centres for its mass production grew up in the Midlands and Oxford. But it was suburban railway lines more than the car that enabled towns to spread beyond their old limits, with vast numbers of new houses. Britain’s working and lower middle classes felt new optimism:

Housing was now available, affordable, and of a quality unimaginable only a few decades earlier. . . . The lives of many working-class people were transformed: instead of overcrowded slum conditions, there was now the possibility of new, low-density, well-equipped housing in pleasant suburban locations offering security and respectability. . . . One third of all houses in England and Wales [in 1939] were built between 1918 and 1939.<sup>33</sup>

Much of this housing was built for the working classes by local government.<sup>34</sup> But a long-term strategy of governments of the 1920s and 1930s, of whatever party, was to strengthen Britain's middle classes through privately built housing and the spread of owner occupation.<sup>35</sup> There were many reasons for this, including a clear political agenda that was widely understood at the time. In an era of socialist politics punctuated and underlined by the General Strike, economic depression and mass unemployment, Britain's conservative establishment was keen to promote new forms of individualism in order to prevent the emergence of what were perceived to be threats to the country's social and economic stability. Governments promoted suburban housebuilding for political reasons. 'Private housing of the villa-garden type was thought to turn people away from "socialism"', says Ross McKibbin, 'The possession of property, the delights of a garden, and the demands and satisfactions of a small but healthy family provided, it was argued, the best kind of support for an individualist politics'.<sup>36</sup> This individualism was not being imposed by an authoritarian and manipulative government, but was what the middle classes themselves demanded. In Paul Oliver's analysis:

The suburban semi was a complex reaction against a number of other house forms: it was opposed to the image of the Victorian terrace, with its 'collective' associations beneath a single roof, and from which many of the lower and middle class had come; it was contrary to the style of the factories with their heartless, anonymous, technical efficiency; it was against the style of the Continental Modern Movement, whose 'machine-for-living-in' aesthetic was inimical to the picture of domesticity; and it challenged the style of the municipal housing estate, whose upper middle-class champions, in a not untypical role-reversal, had spent their childhood in individualised housing and who now aspired, for the masses, if not for themselves, towards a collective image.<sup>37</sup>

As well as being built as a device to accomplish ideological ends, the new lower-middle-class suburban house, however much its forms were determined by its producers, was also, as Oliver suggests, a symbolic statement by its owners. Their new suburban homes were expressions of middle-class individualism and empowerment. They were houses for people who felt they would decide for themselves what they wanted, and who, safe in the sympathetic hands of speculative builders, resisted having tastes imposed on them by industrialists or intellectuals. In 1946, in *The Castles on the Ground* (Figure 8.1), J. M. Richards noted that a suburb should be



understood on its own terms, as a landscape that had not existed until a generation of lower-middle-class people brought it to life:

The world the suburb creates, through the care and labour lavished on it, is an *ad hoc* world, conjured out of nothing . . . the suburb is not primarily a mechanism, nor is it in any sense a modification of something previously existing; it is a world peculiar to itself and . . . before and behind it there is nothing.<sup>38</sup>

The massed suburbs did appear quickly, and they produced an environment that had not been there before, but they are not, of course, without history. They are the built expression of ideas and forces that had been felt many times before. What happened suddenly was that mass production for a mass market could be brought to bear on these ideas. There was a centralized political will to encourage things along, but the elements of the individual's will that were being harnessed were much the same as those identified by the Board of Agriculture over a hundred years earlier. The surface expression was novel, but its roots were deep.

### The Englishman's home

Hermann Muthesius, writing for a German audience in 1904, explained that:

The great store that the English still set by owning their home is part of this powerful sense of the individual personality. The Englishman sees the whole of life embodied in his house. Here in the heart of his family, self-sufficient and feeling no great urge for sociability, pursuing his own interests in virtual isolation, he finds his happiness and his real spiritual comfort.<sup>39</sup>

Moreover, he says, the English are antipathetic to city life and particularly to 'the hubbub of the metropolitan streets, [or] a visit to the *Bierkeller* or a café'.<sup>40</sup> The Englishman's sense of self is caught up in a personal attachment to a little plot of land, where decisions can be taken without reference to a higher authority. George Orwell, particularly in his novel *Coming Up for Air* (1939), supports Muthesius' observations. His protagonist George Bowling is not won over to the new culture of the suburbs which he sees as endemic:

Building societies are the cleverest racket of modern times . . . But the really subtle swindle . . . is the mental one. Merely because of the illusion that we own our own houses and have what's called a 'stake in the country', we poor saps in the Hesperides, and in all such places, are turned into [the banker's] devoted slaves for ever.<sup>41</sup>

Orwell is suggesting that the notion of a stake in the country is in fact a conservative myth. In doing so he makes reference to the pre-Elizabethan feudal order, and suggests that however free and independent the householders might feel, their

condition is as shackled as serfs. Making 'the house with a little plot of land' a symbol of a stake in the country connects directly back to the Board of Agriculture's concern to promote political stability. Richards saw inter-war suburban houses not simply as expressions of 'home' but also as expressions of personal and individual creativity – of each person's (or each nuclear family unit's) identity. Moreover, as he pointed out, many of these new suburban homes manifested an order and cleanliness that reflected the power and will of their owners:

The well-scrubbed floor is echoed in the well-mown lawn, the polished grate in the weeded gravel path, the Welsh dresser with its rows of gleaming plates in the vegetable bed where the purple-sprouting broccoli is planted in equally meticulous rows, and each plant of the winter lettuce is carefully tied up with bass to keep even its outer leaves from dropping on to the damp or dusty ground.<sup>42</sup>

The Englishman's suburban house was a place where the new middle classes believed they could express their creativity and individuality. However, as Richards implies here, these suburban spaces were also an expression of something else – a deep English liberality, a narrative of the Englishman who in his own space should be considered his own master or king. A great difference between these dwellings and those promoted by the Board of Agriculture was the source of income. The vegetable garden here might enhance the family's diet, but it is not seen as its principal means of subsistence. The house and garden are sustained by income from employment in the town, and the dwelling is the place where money is spent and where status accrues, partly through the display of the property itself and its furnishings, but perhaps more importantly through the display of good character in the well-maintained domestic order. The bond between the householder and the property becomes strong because the maintenance of this order in the house and garden consumes so much time. Ownership is achieved not only through the formal legalities of the title deeds, but is also fully congruent with the pre-modern 'rights' adumbrated by Locke.<sup>43</sup> The inhabitants may in fact turn out to be leading lives of quiet desperation, but the idyll is of domestic contentment achieved by caring for the property and one's family.

### **Neo-Georgian and Tudor styles**

Specific architectural styles came with this middle-class individualism. During the 1920s and 1930s most new houses incorporated references to either Georgian or Tudor architecture.<sup>44</sup> Both styles could connect with a new language of lower-middle-class individualism, but much council housing adopted a Neo-Georgian vocabulary, so Mock-Tudor houses were the more explicit and visible expression of this new ethos. The Tudoresque house made sense because it made allusions to a pervasive popular 'knowledge' (often historically inaccurate) of the Tudor period and a distinct cultural Tudor revival – the vernacular-folkloric world of *Merrie England*. This Tudor revival connected with a variety of ideas, including that of independence and the notion of a 'self-reliant Englishman'. Garner and Stratton's two-volume study of *The Domestic*

*Architecture of England during the Tudor Period* (1929) makes the claim that Tudor domestic life was of a kind that was absent elsewhere in Europe:

One of the chief reasons that makes this particular period of such supreme importance is that the house building is indigenous to the soil. It is as radical as the name with which it is shaped; it breathes the restful yet vigorous spirit of the time that gave it birth and without is characterized by a self-contained homeliness redolent of the life and customs of the Englishman of the day, and impossible to be either originated or imitated by his Continental contemporaries.<sup>45</sup>

Such views were commonplace. *Ideal Home* was pervasively illustrated with attainable-looking Tudor-style homes. Even as late as the 1950s it proselytized:

The more we learn about English homes and habits of the past, the more we discover how practical and pleasant they were, even in quite early times. Man does not want much to make him happy, and the needs of past ages were fulfilled out of the conditions that obtained. And there was always a margin of culture and comfort, at least for the middle and upper classes. 'Merry England' of Elizabeth's day, in spite of the dark sides, justifies its title. Compared with the state of affairs on the Continent, the Englishman was free from political despotism and he used his freedom to explore the world and extend his trade far beyond Europe. The Elizabethan chronicler, William Harrison, gives a convincing picture of the ordinary Englishman's life in the second half of the sixteenth century. Houses of yeoman farmers, town craftsmen, and other citizens of the middling sort, had roofs of thatch and walls of 'wattle and daub' – a type of house which aroused the contempt of visiting Spaniards. But, according to Harrison when they saw the kind and quantity of food which was being eaten inside these cottages, they were aroused to admiration and wonder. 'These English have their houses made of sticks and dirt, but they fare commonly so well as the King.'<sup>46</sup>

This presents an idealized image of the Tudor Englishman's home as a place of independence and plenty. A crucial detail in the account of the Tudor myth is the allusion to the idea of a middle-class way of life. *Ideal Home's* readership is plainly expected to identify neither with the aristocrat nor the peasant, but with the yeomen and skilled artisans of the 'middling sort'. Discussion of the Tudor period and of the domestic life of the middle-class Tudor house is a direct appeal to the readers of *Ideal Home* to connect with their lost heritage.

### Varieties of Tudoresque

Much of the literature on the Tudoresque house in the inter-war period is to be found in popular periodicals, such as *Ideal Home* and *Good Housekeeping*. The traditional themes of domestic independence and comfort, which Muthesius had noted, were

sustained, and two important aspects of the ideology of middle-class independence strongly connect with the Tudoresque. One evokes the idea of serenity, authenticity and a simple life. The other is an idea of the independence of the self-made man that is enmeshed with prosperity and the successful English entrepreneur. These narratives pick up on precedents in Arts and Crafts houses (by C. F. A. Voysey, M. H. Baillie Scott and others). Arts and Crafts architecture had no aversion to Tudoresque motifs and often found them appropriate.<sup>47</sup> For example, Raymond Unwin's *Town Planning and Modern Architecture at the Hampstead Garden Suburb* (1909) presented Baillie Scott's Tudoresque work as embodying a spirit of craftsmanship: 'Lovers of oak and honest English timber will find pleasure in the beams and panelling of Mr Baillie Scott's interiors, which recall old traditions of English craftsmanship'.<sup>48</sup> In its symbolism the Mock Tudor of the 1920s and 1930s was strongly connected to the Arts and Crafts movement, but it represents a move down the social scale, which involved compromises in, if not abandonment of, the Arts and Crafts ethos.

But, if we go back to George Orwell's *Coming Up for Air* of a generation later, something quite different is going on. At the end of this highly polemical novel, Orwell's anti-hero, George Bowling, returns to his childhood home of Binfield to reminisce about the 'good old days' of his infancy. He finds the place is not what it once was. It is now covered with 'Bogus Tudor' houses and other symbols of inauthenticity, blatant consumerism and social decline. It is also now populated by a new breed of 'simple-lifer' middle-class people engaged in vegetarianism, folk music and nudism. Bowling relates a meeting with such a person:

Immediately, as though I'd asked him, he began telling me all about the Upper Binfield Estate and young Edward Watkin, the architect, who had such a feeling for the Tudor, and was such a wonderful fellow at finding genuine Elizabethan beams in old farmhouses and buying them at ridiculous prices. And such an interesting young fellow, quite the life and soul of the nudist parties. He repeated a number of times that they were very exceptional people in Upper Binfield, quite different from Lower Binfield, they were determined to enrich the countryside instead of defiling it (I'm using his own phrase), and there weren't any public houses on the estate.<sup>49</sup>

The way social pretension goes hand in hand with the aspiration for simplicity plainly dooms the whole set-up in Orwell's eyes. The fictional re-used antique Elizabethan timbers are a world away from the unaffected 'honest English timbers' in Baillie Scott's work, as Bowling recognizes:

He began to show me round the estate. There was nothing left of the woods. It was all houses, houses – and what houses! Do you know these faked-up Tudor houses with the curly roofs and the buttresses that don't buttress anything, and the rock-gardens with concrete bird-baths and those red plaster elves you can buy at the florists'? You could see in your mind's eye the awful gang of food-cranks and spook-hunters and

simple-lifers with 1,000 pounds a year that lived there. Even the pavements were crazy. I didn't let him take me far. Some of the houses made me wish I'd got a hand-grenade in my pocket.<sup>50</sup>

While Orwell deplores what he sees and presents it scornfully, it is clear that the fictional Upper Binfield resident sees the Tudoresque as a means of connecting with a traditional idea of country-cottage living, in the woodland of Merrie England away from the Industrial Revolution and its consequences. The Tudoresque could be associated with an idea of the simple life, but it was also part of another more materialistic and widespread idea of social and cultural middle-class independence. Osbert Lancaster, in his contemporaneous and larkish architectural taxonomy *Pillar to Post* (1938), famously identified three versions of Tudoresque style: 'Wimbledon Transitional', 'Stockbroker's Tudor' and 'Bypass Variegated'. Of the Tudoresque in general he says:

The invention of new and cheaper methods of production brought it within the reach of the builders of Metroland. And today when the passer-by is a little unnerved at being suddenly confronted with a hundred and fifty representations of Anne Hathaway's cottage . . . he should pause to reflect on the extraordinary fact that all over the country the latest and most scientific methods of mass-production are being utilised to turn out a stream of old oak beams, leaded window panes and small discs of bottle-glass, all structural devices which our ancestors lost no time in abandoning as soon as an increase in wealth and knowledge enabled them to do so.<sup>51</sup>

In terms similar to Gloag's, Lancaster condemns the anachronistic and uncraftsman-like qualities of these buildings which he connects with money and new middle-class lifestyles. 'Stockbroker's Tudor' suggests a certain level of prosperity, and perhaps a nouveau riche incompetence in judging fine taste, while he mentions 'simple-lifers' and other British intellectuals in connection with 'Wimbledon Transitional', which he sees as a version of art nouveau – a very pale version.<sup>52</sup> 'Bypass Variegated' is even more notional in its use of applied decoration to signify the pre-industrial past using mass-produced means. It is this type of lower-middle-class house, what one expects in the Lower Binfield Estate, that is most common and most readily understood as vernacular – no architects here, but the developer-builders' version of the Arts and Crafts house, done on the cheap.

Lancaster's text makes fun of a variety of pretensions, but popular magazines of the 1920s and 1930s took the Tudoresque seriously. In their advertising, illustrations of Tudoresque houses abound. The magazines knew and manipulated their market, and this is what their readers were readily persuaded to consume. This was architecture for ordinary people whose aspirations to home ownership were adequately met by buildings that sought to look old-fashioned. Tudoresque work was routinely presented as tasteful and beautiful: 'simple and unpretentious yet dignified, [suggesting] at once all that is home to the average Englishman'.<sup>53</sup> To be

## 7.6

From *Ideal Home*,  
April 1920.



dignified was to be unpretentious, unostentatious and 'down to earth'. An illustration (Figure 7.6) to an *Ideal Home* article entitled 'A Small Country House' was explained: 'the desire has been to secure a suggestion of homeliness and comfort, something free from all pretension and ostentation; something, indeed, traditionally English'.<sup>54</sup>

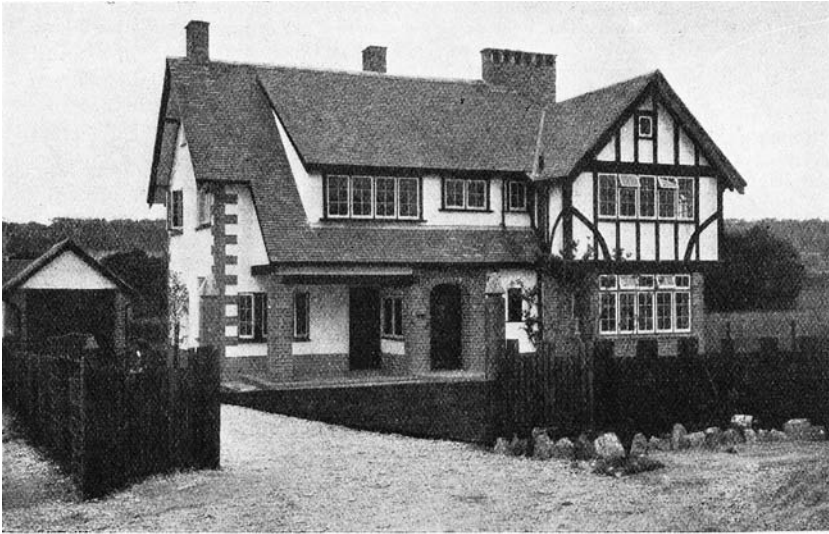
Often (as Lancaster correctly observed) Tudoresque houses were expressions not just of dignity and Englishness, but also of financial success and independence. Articles in *Ideal Home* often encouraged lower-middle-class readers to be thrifty so that they could eventually afford to buy a house. An article entitled 'A Simple Way to be a House Owner' advised:

You may say: this article is of no interest to me because I have not the money. You will be wrong. Most people who have money today or own their own homes started with nothing. They all had to make a beginning, and so should you.<sup>55</sup>

The article was illustrated with a picture of what is described as a 'typical modern house', which is Tudoresque and is presented as 'labour-saving and ideally suitable for the needs of a small family' (Figure 7.7).<sup>56</sup>

### From vernacular to vernacular

The Tudoresque in general, then, is presented as the normal person's aspiration – literally their ideal home. It has connotations of social advancement and success, allied with the perceived English virtues of avoiding pretension and ostentation. In the popular press the Tudoresque is the most frequent domestic image of the aspirations of a self-reliant and independent young middle-class businessman. Moreover, alongside the pride, success and ownership that are being encouraged, a narrative of the land was always connected to advertisements for Tudoresque houses. Here, for example, is an advertisement from a Metroland Annual Guidebook:



7.7  
From *Ideal Home*,  
January 1930.

This is a typical modern house built on the Stoke Paddocks Estate. It is thoroughly labour-saving and ideally suitable for the needs of a small family.

This is a good parcel of English soil in which to build home and strike root, inhabited from of old, as witness the lines of camps on the hill tops and the confused mounds among the woods, the great dyke which crossed it east and west, the British trackways, the Roman road aslant the eastern border, the pack-horse ways worn deep in the steep hill sides, the innumerable field paths which mark the labourer's daily routine from hamlet to farm. The new settlement of Metro-land proceeds apace; the new colonists thrive amain.<sup>57</sup>

Here it becomes clear that in addition to such practical considerations as good facilities and economical running costs, which could be met by a building of any stripe, the special appeal of the Tudoresque lies in the fact that it helps the owner to feel that the building's plot is a little piece of Old England, and that connotation brings with it the feeling of success and identification with the place and the well-being of the country. The idea of independence and self-reliance is important also, and in the Tudoresque house's imagery there is a direct link back to the cottages of pre-industrial England, so it seems to be an appropriate setting for artisanal 'DIY' projects, in a way that the more socially pretentious or council-owned Neo-Georgian house might not be.<sup>58</sup>

A handbook like Nathaniel Kent's *Hints* (1775) considers housing as a practical matter, and shows how economical dwellings could be constructed in various ways.<sup>59</sup> The designs are presented not as works of originality, but as sensible traditional ways of building that had been continuing for centuries before finding their way into print. James Malton's *An Essay on British Cottage Architecture* (1798) is quite different in its ambition, because it introduces the idea of self-conscious aesthetic appreciation into the design, as its subtitle makes clear – it is 'an attempt to

perpetuate on principle' what had previously occurred by chance.<sup>60</sup> So it takes a step away from the vernacular, and shows the designer how to produce quasi-vernacular effects. The artisanal qualities that were favoured by the Arts and Crafts architects allowed an aspect of vernacular architecture to be harnessed in finely wrought buildings that appealed to educated and aesthetically sophisticated clients, some of them aristocratic. When the well-to-do built black-and-white Tudoresque, the overtones of the cottage suggest the *cottage orné* – the embrace of a simple life, a retreat from the pressures of the town.

The mass housing of the 1920s and 1930s saw the Tudoresque adopted as England's 'normal' building style, for people who did not want to be seen as pretentious but who wanted to invest in their own little bit of England. There is a way of describing these buildings as kitsch – a manner of speaking of them as cheap versions of Arts and Crafts houses, done without the art or the craft, but by the application of rather sketchy allusions to the architecture of 'Merrie England', which is vaguely mythic and never historically rigorous. However, what was valued about them was not their artistic quality but their capacity to empower and give a sense of self-worth and good character to their owner-occupiers, for whom these modest buildings were normally a step of social advancement. That too might be an illusion, as Orwell suggested, but it is nevertheless a real and ingrained idea. The houses in this style became once more a real vernacular exactly because the educated classes sneered and were unprepared to learn from them. In an anti-intellectual culture like England's the professional establishment's scorn could only act as a recommendation to a sturdy householder. It was a reassurance that the householders could be settled and old-fashioned if they so chose. It made them feel that they were in charge of their own destiny and would not be bullied on matters of taste. Therefore, as architects have been reluctant to be drawn into participation in low-cost Tudoresque designs, the popular desire for them has not abated, and they continue to be built, now as a vernacular architecture.

## Notes

- 1 John Gloag, *Design in Modern Life* (London, 1934, reprinted 1946), pp. 19–20. Gloag was prominent in the Design and Industries Association, promoting modernist design. He served on its Furniture and Equipment Committee. See Elizabeth Darling, *Re-Forming Britain: Narratives of Modernity before Reconstruction* (London, 2006), p. 219, n. 137.
- 2 Paul Oliver, Ian Davis and Ian Bentley, *Dunroamin: The Suburban Semi and its Enemies* (London, 1981, reprinted 1994).
- 3 The magazine *Ideal Home* was a particularly widely read proponent of the Tudoresque. See also, P. A. Barron, *The House Desirable: A Handbook for Those Who Wish to Acquire Homes That Charm* (London, 1927).
- 4 Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of the Modern Movement* (London, 1936), revised as *Pioneers of Modern Design* (Harmondsworth, 1960). Hermann Muthesius made the Arts and Crafts architects culturally significant for German modernity, and Pevsner was trying to show the British that modernism was less German and more British than was often thought – for example by Sir Reginald Blomfield, in *Modernismus* (London, 1934).
- 5 For example: J. M. Richards, *The Castles on the Ground: The Anatomy of Suburbia* (London, 1946, 2nd edn 1973); Alan Jackson, *Semi-Detached London: Suburban Development, Life and Transport, 1900–39* (London, 1973); John Betjeman, *Metro-Land* (London, 1977); Arthur Edwards,



- The Design of Suburbia* (London, 1981); ed. Andrew Saint, *London Suburbs* (London, 1999); Mark Swenarton, 'Tudor Walters and Tudorbethan: Reassessing Britain's Inter-War Suburbs', *Planning Perspectives*, 17 (2002), pp. 267–86; Museum of Domestic Design and Architecture, *Little Palaces* (London, 2003); Peter Waymark, *A History of Petts Wood* (Petts Wood, 1983, 4th edn 2000).
- 6 Darling, *Re-Forming Britain*, p. 82.
- 7 Gavin Stamp, 'Neo-Tudor and its Enemies', *Architectural History*, 49 (2006), pp. 1–33.
- 8 Lee Goff, *Tudor Style: Tudor Revival Houses in America from 1890 to the Present* (New York, 2002); John Seiberling, Ian Adams, Barney Taxel and Steve Love, *Stan Hywet Hall and Gardens* (Akron, Ohio, 2000).
- 9 Stamp, 'Neo-Tudor', and, for the wider cultural framework, see: Michael Dobson and Nicola J. Watson, *England's Elizabeth: An Afterlife in Fame and Fantasy* (Oxford, 2002); Jack Lynch, *The Age of Elizabeth in the Age of Johnson* (Cambridge, 2002); Jack Lynch, *Becoming Shakespeare* (London, 2008); Peter Barnes, *Jubilee* (London, 2001).
- 10 Richard Payne Knight, *The Landscape: A Didactic Poem* (London, 1794); Gavin Edward Townsend, *The Tudor House in America: 1890–1930* (doctoral thesis, University of California, Santa Barbara, 1986). See also, Andrew Ballantyne, *Architecture, Landscape and Liberty: Richard Payne Knight and the Picturesque* (Cambridge, 1997).
- 11 Andrew Ballantyne, 'Joseph Gandy and the Politics of Rustic Charm', in *Articulating British Classicism: New Approaches to Eighteenth-Century Architecture*, eds Barbara Arciszewska and Elizabeth McKellar (London, 2004), pp. 163–85.
- 12 Oliver *et al.*, *Dunroamin*.
- 13 These ideas will be developed further and set in conjunction with other discontinuous narratives in a book: Andrew Ballantyne and Andrew Law, *Tudoresque: Histories of a Popular Architecture*, forthcoming.
- 14 For a theoretical discussion setting out this view of architecture see Andrew Ballantyne, 'The Nest and the Pillar of Fire', in *What Is Architecture?*, ed. Andrew Ballantyne (London, 2002).
- 15 Ballantyne, 'Joseph Gandy', p. 165.
- 16 Osbert Lancaster, *Pillar to Post* (London, 1938).
- 17 David Hume, *The History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution in 1688*, 8 vols (1754–62) and many subsequent editions; see Lynch, *Age of Elizabeth*, p. 65.
- 18 See also, Henry Hallam, *View of the State of Europe During the Middle Ages* (London, 1818), pp. 440–1.
- 19 James Thomson and David Mallet, *Alfred, King of England*, a masque first performed in 1740. Alfred the Great was best known for resisting Viking invasions.
- 20 John Archer, *Architecture and Suburbia: From English Villa to American Dream House, 1690–2000* (Minneapolis, 2005). Note that the John Archer cited here is not the British architectural historian of the same name. See also, Michael McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private and the Division of Knowledge* (Baltimore, 2005); Mark Swenarton, *Homes Fit for Heroes: The Politics and Architecture of Early State Housing* (London, 1981).
- 21 John Locke, *Second Treatise of Civil Government* (London, 1690), section 27, as cited in Archer, *Architecture and Suburbia*, p. 25.
- 22 Locke, *Second Treatise*, sections 32 and 33.
- 23 Ballantyne, 'Joseph Gandy', pp. 163–4.
- 24 A section of the Act of 1589 reads: 'For the avoydinge of the great inconvenience whiche are founde by experience to growe by the recetinge and buyldinge of great numbers and multitude of cottage . . . are dylie more and more increased in manye part of this realme: be it enacted by the Quenes most excellent Majestie . . . and the commons in this psent Parliament assembled and by the authoritie of the same . . . [that] . . . noe pson shall within this Realme of Englande make buylde or erect, or cause to be made buylded or erected, any manner of Cottage for habitation or dwelling . . . unless the same pson doe assigne and laye to the same cottage or Buylding fower acres of Grownde at the least'. See *Statutes of the Realm*, 1589–90 (London, 1963) IV/2, ch. 7,

- pp. 804–5. In 1797 it was observed: ‘The cottage Law of Queen Elizabeth, which required that four acres of land should be attached for ever to each cottage, precluded the necessity of commons. This statute has been repealed. Four acres of land were too much for the spade, and too little for the plough, and therefore it was wise in the legislative authority, at a time when pasture gave place to tillage, to abrogate this law. Yet, perhaps, it would have been more advisable merely to have lessened the quantity of land required for each cottage, than to have dropped this provision altogether’. Robert Beatson, ‘On Cottages’ (1796) in *Communications to the Board of Agriculture* (London, 1797), I, p. 106.
- 25 Letter from Lord Brownlow to Sir John Sinclair (President of the Board of Agriculture) 22 Feb. 1796, in ‘Queries Concerning Cottages. With the Answers’, in *Communications to the Board of Agriculture* (London, 1797), I, p. 86.
  - 26 James Malton, *An Essay on British Cottage Architecture: Being an Attempt to Perpetuate on Principle, that Peculiar Mode of Building, which was Originally the Effect of Chance* (London, 1798).
  - 27 Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (London, 1790).
  - 28 Samuel Smiles, *Self-Help: With Illustrations of Character and Conduct* (London, 1859).
  - 29 John Stevenson, *Social Conditions in Britain between the Wars* (Harmondsworth, 1977), p. 15.
  - 30 *Ibid.*, pp. 11–12.
  - 31 *Ibid.*, p. 17.
  - 32 *Ibid.*
  - 33 Trevor Rowley, *The English Landscape in the Twentieth Century* (London, 2006), p. 195.
  - 34 Mark Swenarton, *Building the New Jerusalem: Architecture, Housing and Politics 1900–1930* (Bracknell, 2008).
  - 35 Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England 1918–1951* (Oxford, 1998), p. 77.
  - 36 *Ibid.*, p. 77.
  - 37 Paul Oliver, ‘The Galleon on the Front Door: Imagery of the House and Garden’, in Oliver *et al.*, *Dunroamin*, p. 157.
  - 38 Richards, *Castles*, pp. 22–3.
  - 39 Hermann Muthesius, *Das Englische Haus*, 3 vols (Berlin, 1904–5, 2nd edn 1908–11). A slightly abridged one-volume version of the second edition was translated by Janet Seligman as *The English House* (London, 1979), p. 7.
  - 40 *Ibid.*
  - 41 George Orwell, *Coming Up for Air* (London, 1939; edn Harmondsworth, 1962), pp. 11–13.
  - 42 Richards, *Castles*, pp. 22–3.
  - 43 See Note 22 above.
  - 44 Oliver *et al.*, *Dunroamin*; McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*.
  - 45 Thomas Garner and Arthur Stratton, *The Domestic Architecture of England During the Tudor Period* (London, 1929).
  - 46 R. W. Symonds, ‘The “Passing Delicacie” of the English Home’, in *Ideal Home*, 1952–3, pp. 66–75.
  - 47 D. Simpson, ‘Beautiful Tudor’, *Architectural Review*, 162 (July 1977), p. 695.
  - 48 Raymond Unwin, *Town Planning and Modern Architecture at the Hampstead Garden Suburb* (New York, 1909), p. 21. There is an extensive bibliography for Baillie Scott, but see especially Diane Haigh, *Baillie Scott: The Artistic House* (London, 2004) which is particularly well illustrated and shows various houses that have a Tudoresque aspect that is never mentioned as such.
  - 49 Orwell, *Coming Up*, pp. 225–8.
  - 50 *Ibid.*
  - 51 Lancaster, *Pillar to Post*, p. 76.
  - 52 *Ibid.*, p. 74.
  - 53 *Ideal Home*, Dec. 1921, p. 217.
  - 54 *Ideal Home*, April 1920, p. 133.
  - 55 *Ideal Home*, Jan. 1930, p. 48.

**A. Ballantyne and A. Law**

56 Ibid.

57 *Metroland Annual Guide Book 1927* (London, 1927), p. 30.

58 C. Alexander, 'How I Panelled My Own Jacobean Room', *Ideal Home*, Oct. 1920; H. Reynolds, 'How to Make an Oak Canopy', *Ideal Home*, Nov. 1921.

59 Nathaniel Kent, *Hints to Gentlemen of Landed Property* (London, 1775).

60 Malton, *Essay*.

## Chapter 8

# ‘The Hollow Victory’ of Modern Architecture and the Quest for the Vernacular

J. M. Richards and ‘the Functional  
Tradition’

*Erdem Erten*

### Introduction

Modernism and anonymity have remained largely irreconcilable, especially in the field of architecture. As the omnipotent symbol of creativity and artistic power, the personality of the nineteenth-century Romantic artist defined the transgressive nature of his early twentieth-century avant-garde successor, while nurturing the emergence of the celebrity architect. Valuing authorship above anonymity, the cult(ure) of avant-gardism has invested the modern artist with the power to see beyond culture and tradition to generate cultural transformation. It is peculiar, then, to see that one of the chief editors of the leading modern architecture journals of Britain, J. M. Richards, wrote extensively on the idea of anonymity and the value of vernacular architectures.

Richards had a significant role in the development of modern architecture in Britain while at the helm of the *Architectural Review* (hereafter *AR*) alongside Nikolaus Pevsner and the journal’s proprietor and editor H. de C. Hastings. He was also active in several other roles, sometimes simultaneously, as a member of the Royal Fine Art Commission, architectural correspondent for *The Times* and ‘in effect’ architectural consultant to the BBC.<sup>1</sup> Richards was both a member of the Modern Architectural Research (MARS) Group, the British chapter of CIAM (Congrès Internationaux d’Architecture Moderne) dedicated to modernism, and a founding member of the Georgian Group and the Victorian Society, advancing the cause of conservation in Britain, seemingly conflicting associations.

This chapter will focus on Richards's editorial role at *AR*, showing how he promoted anonymity as a social and cultural ideal as a result of his sympathy for Popular Front politics and 1940s Marxism in Britain, with brief background about his pre-war work on vernacular architecture. Richards believed that a reinterpretation of vernacular architecture was needed to rejuvenate anonymity in modern architecture. The urge to preserve thereby a degree of homogeneity in the built environment largely stemmed from his commitment to social realism, probably one reason why he was given the nickname 'Karl Marx' by John Betjeman. Through a recontextualization of episodes in Richards's career I aim to trace the continuity and the ruptures within Richards's promotion of anonymity, and to shed further light on the rise of interest in vernacular architecture in the post-war period.

The promotion of anonymity was a significant component of the post-war agenda set by *AR*'s editors, and on this subject Richards was the most outspoken voice. In January 1947, *AR* published an ambitious and anonymous manifesto, entitled 'The Second Half Century' in which the editors called for a post-avant-garde 'regime' in modern architecture. According to the manifesto this regime concerned the expansion and consolidation of 'the revolution' that brought forward early twentieth-century modern architecture as a succession of avant-garde movements. The editors argued that in this new regime modern architecture should be humanized by a recovery of ornament, colour, texture and a consciousness of history in relation to place. The commitment to anonymity was expressed in a section titled '*The Architectural Review demonstrates the antiquity of the functional tradition*'.<sup>2</sup> The aim was to develop a new anonymity by putting modern architecture in dialogue with vernaculars, complementing *AR*'s urban-design pedagogy developed under the rubric of 'Townscape'. Addressing the contextualist demand of 'Townscape', 'the Functional Tradition' was articulated as the timeless core of architecture exposed to view by the advent of functionalism. In articles and campaigns that followed, *AR* problematized the role of history, symbolism and communication in modern architecture, the augmentation of materiality and the need for regional variety in opposition to an international style that the editors found stagnant. In running campaigns that advocated cultural continuity, the editors took complementary roles: Nikolaus Pevsner interpreted anonymity in relation to cultural particularism via *Kunstgeographie*, an art-historical method that relied particularly on the relation between geography and art; Hastings saw 'Townscape' as key in order for 'built forms of local culture' and specific 'ways-of-life' to be handed over to future generations; and Richards looked for an articulation of the particular within the universal, and vice versa, via social realism.

'The Functional Tradition' began as a special issue in January 1950 and appeared in *AR* several times across more than a decade. It was an insert dedicated to domestic or industrial vernacular buildings such as warehouses, docks, sheds, beach huts, bridges, pubs, breweries, maltings, etc. Spotted in structures where 'clearly some anonymous force was seen to have dictated the form', the editors believed that specimens of 'the Functional Tradition' demonstrated a genealogical link to modern functionalism. This connection would influence architects of the younger generation, especially James Stirling and his circle, testifying to *AR*'s success.

In his May 1972 'annual discourse' addressing the Royal Institute of British Architects, Richards created serious controversy when he declared that the victory seemingly won by modern architecture was, for him, hollow. Coming from the mouth of a critic and historian who had devoted almost all his life to the promotion of modern architecture in Britain and around the world, what sounded to many like Richards's renunciation of modern architecture was, in fact, essentially a reiteration of his belief in modern architecture's potential to create a new anonymity.

### **J. M. Richards and the quest for 'the vernacular'**

Richards's interest in the vernacular stayed constant, but its subtext changed over the years. In the 1930s when Richards was affiliated with avant-garde circles he believed that a new anonymity was possible via an astylistic approach to architecture and that the developing technological infrastructure allowed for new possibilities of architectural expression. From the 1940s to the first half of the 1950s social realism and the problem of finding a cultural expression for the changing lives of different classes dominated his interest. In the late 1950s he promoted vernacular architectures as the unifying threads in built environments and as bearers of cultural continuity. When the 1960s were coming to a close Richards offered a rereading of his *The Castles on the Ground* (1946, republished in 1973) within the agendas of advocacy planning, client participation and the rooting of architects in particular localities.

In the 1930s Richards's left-wing political sensitivities were honed in the struggle against the rise of fascism and totalitarianism. In his *Memoirs* Richards recounts the political atmosphere of the time and his subsequent disillusionment with the USSR:

What I remember as characteristic of the 1930s is something very different, which did for a time play a part in my life. This was the development of passionate political feelings among people like myself to whom in other circumstances politics would have meant nothing. They were the days of the rise of Fascism, of the Spanish Civil War, of the Popular Front; to be more specific, of Adowa and the Reichstag trial, of Leon Blum and Potato Jones; in England of Mosley's Blackshirts and the Left Book Club. I and my friends and acquaintances joined and subscribed and protested and marched in support of left-wing and anti-Fascist causes that seemed desperately to matter. . . . At the same time the identification of freedom with the left became the common currency of my generation, and decades of disillusioning happenings in Hungary and Czechoslovakia were needed before we relinquished our deep-seated belief that in seeking the social ideal we should look always towards Russia.<sup>3</sup>

When Richards was affiliated with left-wing avant-garde circles in the 1930s, he believed that the modern movement's aim was to give society a unity of social and cultural purpose.<sup>4</sup> Richards argued that cultural unity expressed itself as a common language observed in vernaculars. In the article he contributed to *Circle: International*

*Survey of Constructive Art* (1937) Richards adopted a contrary position to the other contributors' avant-gardism by ruling individualism irrelevant in architecture, in contradistinction to modern art. Superseding the individualist will to expression, anonymity would be produced instinctively as a result of the assimilation of architectural culture. An anonymous tradition of 'cultural value' could be recovered only by the astylistic contribution of modern architecture.

In his popular *An Introduction to Modern Architecture* (1940), which was intended not only to give a historical introduction to the development of modern architecture, but also to dispel the propaganda of its detractors,<sup>5</sup> Richards argued that modern architecture was not to be understood separately from the 'roots of the national culture', because it could accommodate cultural differentiation with reference to 'temperaments, ideals, climates, habits and raw materials'.<sup>6</sup> It was acculturation and habit that determined the 'instinctive selection of materials, shapes and colours; [and] our emotional reaction to climate and to social relations'.<sup>7</sup> Richards believed, therefore, that 'decent' modern architecture would be produced by 'decent' but ordinary architects, who could translate these sensitivities into architecture – an architecture of the community instead of an architecture of difference and constant innovation.<sup>8</sup> Modern architecture could bring about the emergence of new vernacular traditions.

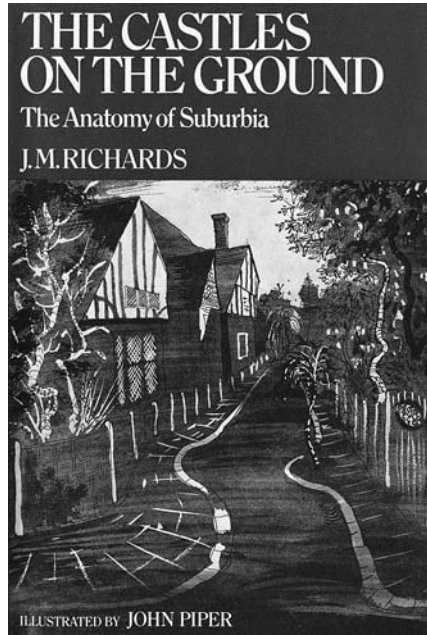
Inspired by Hassan Fathy's work at Gourni in Egypt, Richards developed a fascination with Middle Eastern vernaculars during his years in the Ministry of Information Bureau in Cairo from 1942, and this fed into articles published after his return in 1946. This period away from Britain also inspired *The Castles on the Ground* (Figure 8.1). This book attempted to analyse suburbia by looking into the economy, class, culture and psychology that characterized the earlier twentieth-century suburban environment around London. Richards argued that the

suburban environment is the choice of people who know what they like, and the architecture of the suburb may even be called a true contemporary vernacular . . . it has the one quality of all true vernaculars, that of *being rooted in the people's instincts*, and even its shortcomings . . . are evidence of this closeness to everyday life.<sup>9</sup>

Richards saw the real source of the vernacular in the assimilation of traditional knowledge by builders and others who were not necessarily architects, in other words, in the existence of a seemingly subconscious architectural culture. Suburbia was the 'architecture of the people by the people', the closest embodiment of the Morrisian ideal in British society. He believed that suburbia was populated and produced by the classes who felt in control of the world around them.<sup>10</sup> Hence, in this world the planner or architect should simply 'play the part of guide, rather than that of a didactic school teacher', enabling and consulting rather than educating the client.<sup>11</sup> His evaluation of London's early twentieth-century suburbs in relation to the cultural preferences of the middle and upper-middle class and this environment's potential to provide an exemplar for contemporary architects was largely overlooked. The book

8.1

J. M. Richards,  
*The Castles on the Ground*, London:  
John Murray, 1973  
(1st edition by the  
Architectural Press,  
London, 1946).  
Cover illustration by  
John Piper.



was criticized for providing a nostalgic account of suburban life from the author's childhood and for failing to provide a critical discussion of the role of taste.

### **Social realism and 'the next step' for modern architecture**

About a year after 'The Second Half Century' and *The Castles on the Ground* were published a significant controversy broke out about how architecture should serve the people. In May 1947, *AR* published a set of thematic articles entitled 'Reconstruction in the USSR'<sup>12</sup> and written by leading critics and historians, David Arkin, Andrei Bunin and Nikolai Bylinkin.<sup>13</sup> Soviet architects who sent their views on reconstruction followed the party line of cultural policy formulated by Andrey Aleksandrovich Zhdanov.<sup>14</sup> From 1934 the Soviet regime had rejected modernism as art for art's sake, legislated censorship and instituted repressive patronage. Zhdanov believed that the Soviet people demanded a renewal of the architecture that had been produced by the classes that repressed them before the revolution. Under his control, art was reduced to therapeutic pedagogy and propaganda. Popular and realistic themes as well as folk elements prevailed in art in order to manipulate the masses. The work of modernist art critics such as Clement Greenberg would later condemn the results of the policy as 'kitsch'.

Placed before the Soviet authors' articles, the editorial introduction by *AR* argued that the international architectural community was frustrated with Soviet architecture and art because of its ostensibly 'bourgeois' and 'retrogressive' aesthetics.<sup>15</sup> The contemporary Soviet buildings and city plans submitted by the Soviet architects were openly historicist and eclectic in their formal preferences. *AR* argued that such mediocrity could only be excused on account of authoritarian State



patronage. While the editors disapproved the aesthetic, in an implicit critique they declared, however, that they understood the rationale behind the Soviet policy which intended to provide the people with an architecture that communicated.

Almost a year later, in March 1948, the Soviet architects replied with a fierce condemnation of *AR*'s editorial preface sent via the embassy, when an exhibition on Soviet architecture took place in the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA). They argued that *AR* insulted the Soviet people by declaring them architecturally illiterate, and wilfully ignored the Soviet 'achievement towards an organic national culture'. *AR*'s response was to the Soviets' detriment. In a lengthier article the editors decried the repressive policies of the Soviets for excommunicating artists and writers that did not want to participate in Zhdanov's cultural policy. Artistic production could not expect to be in 'religious conformity' with dictatorial measures. The unsigned editorial introduction was presumably written by Richards who hoped that the victory of democracy over totalitarianism and fascism in the post-war world would make modern architectural programmes more responsive to people's utilitarian as well as emotional needs. He expected the USSR would be the first place to yield results in this direction. Anticipating that Soviet architecture would become a major influence in the rapidly transforming post-war world, and dissatisfied with the official policies, he attacked Zhdanovism while acknowledging that the questions socialist realism posed for modern architecture were well founded.

Richards's sympathy for socialist realism evaporated when he was invited to the Congress of Intellectuals for Peace in Poland in 1948. His expectations, shared by many in Britain, that the USSR might create an 'art for the people and by the people' were frustrated by Communist authoritarianism. Furthermore, intellectuals he held in high esteem such as T. S. Eliot, Jean-Paul Sartre, André Malraux and Eugene O'Neill were all condemned by an 'uncompromising, anti-Western, anti-liberal tone'.<sup>16</sup>

This controversy provoked Richards into explaining how his personal position differed from the art policies of the USSR, by differentiating what he called 'social realism' from socialist realism. Against the USSR-dictated Zhdanovist socialist realism, Richards attempted to define a 'social realist approach' to architecture in an article of March 1950 titled 'The Next Step?'. According to Richards, architects were split between continuing modern architecture's self-referentiality by rejecting any appeal to popular taste and by being eager to produce 'something closely resembling a popular vernacular'.<sup>17</sup> In attempting to overcome this split, Richards assessed three alternatives that could define a future for modern architecture, and named them 'unlimited mechanization', 'conscious humanization' and the 'social realist approach'. The advocates of 'unlimited mechanization', like Buckminster Fuller (the young Reyner Banham would later fit this category), asserted that contemporary civilization would replace handicrafts with machine production. Architecture, in order to be in tune with the *Zeitgeist*, had to adapt itself to the procedures of machine production. This was not a completely viable option for Richards, since 'true functionalism' and 'unlimited mechanization' were incompatible. True functionalism had to enable a specific solution to each problem, 'every case to be treated exactly on its merits', and had necessarily to create an architecture of the particular; whereas mechanization, based on the idea of repetitive production, demanded an architecture

of the general. Those who searched for 'a conscious humanization' dealt mainly with the problem of re-establishing the popular appeal of architecture by concentrating on the 'organic and visual', undermining its technical aspects.

By referring to the examples of New Empiricism and the Bay Region Style, Richards argued that the only hope for modern architecture was to concentrate on local characteristics and to evolve a new regionalism from aspects of climate, materials and social needs, to overcome the 'internationalism' of the 1920s. But this approach had the problem of turning into an escape from the dynamics of an 'increasingly unified world, whose problems cannot be solved by a sentimental pre-occupation with the charms and chances of local topography'.<sup>18</sup> Richards believed that the disadvantages of these two approaches would not be overcome by an architectural solution. For him, social realism

stresses always that architecture is simply a reflection of the times that produce it. . . . It goes on to say that the way for architects to enter into the life of their own time is *by making their own specialist contribution to improving the standard of life as it is lived in their time*. Rather than appeal for a renewed popular interest in architecture by making buildings more sympathetic to look at, they should concentrate on demonstrating to the public in the most practical way the role architecture can play in harnessing the products of modern science to human use and in bringing purpose, order and system into a world that suffers at present both from confusion of purpose and from too many competing systems.

When this demonstration has taken place, the argument runs, will be the time enough to see what style of architecture *a new order of society is willing to welcome and is capable of participating in*. . . . *The argument in fact ceases to be an architectural one, because architecture becomes an effect not a cause*. . . . Beyond the functionalism of the general, which is concerned with establishing principles, there is a logical next step, the functionalism of the particular . . . relating it ever more closely to the essential particulars of time and place and purpose. That is the level on which humanity and science meet.<sup>19</sup>

In conclusion, Richards's analysis left the direction of architectural production to the run of history and to the operation of the dialectical principle, revisiting his argument of the 1930s in *Circle* that architecture should drop the search for 'style'. However, for a modern vernacular to emerge it was essential for architecture to be welcomed and participated in by society.

### **'The Functional Tradition'**

Richards's article was closely linked to the January 1950 special issue of *AR* on 'the Functional Tradition' (Figure 8.2).<sup>20</sup> The examples that the editors illustrated were built by generations of craftsmen employing similar principles to modern functionalism, such as designing with 'the most suitable materials, processes and performance' available in their localities.<sup>21</sup> The editors argued that although characterized and



8.2  
A page from the  
*Architectural  
Review's* special  
issue on 'the  
Functional  
Tradition',  
January 1950.

limited by utmost economic necessity, 'the Functional Tradition' transcended bare materiality and brought 'sensuous enjoyment'. The vernaculars published in the issue covered a large spectrum including warehouses, kilns, sheds, piers, signs, fencing, railing, gates, steps, road paving, drains, beach huts, bridges, pubs, windmills, etc., namely anonymous objects of design merit that populated the environment but which were kept out of art-historical interest.<sup>22</sup>

For Richards, objects produced in 'the Functional Tradition' demonstrated that functionalism could be employed 'instinctively as well as consciously'. While modern architecture practised a scientific, 'calculated' functionalism, the 'instinctive'

kind of functionalism that operated in 'the Functional Tradition' continued throughout history. Therefore the future of modern architecture should be shaped by a new definition of functionalism that brought the instinctive into the realm of the calculated. Similarly, in defining the Bay Region Style, which for Richards was an amiable modernist development in the United States, Lewis Mumford had attributed a sense of self-maturation to the modern movement through which it shed its 'quixotic purities, its awkward self-consciousness, [and] its assertive dogmatism', and made use of its developed ability to direct machine production and the processes of industrialization for humanization.<sup>23</sup>

Richards's argument in 'The Next Step?' was strongly influenced by Francis Klingender's pamphlet *Marxism and Modern Art: An Approach to Social Realism* of 1943, in which Klingender evolved a critique of Zhdanovist historicism and Roger Fry's formalism, and assessed possibilities for modern art via a theorization of social realism in art.<sup>24</sup> In his memoirs Richards says little about his first wife, Peggy Angus, artist and art teacher, whose influence on his thinking about society, politics and art was probably considerable; they were effectively separated by the war and divorced in 1948. Known as 'the Red Angus', she was a vocal defender of Soviet Russia, which she had visited before the couple married in 1936, and she was in touch with art historians like Klingender. Klingender argued that, by limiting aesthetic experience to 'pure' form, Fry impoverished the world of art, while his followers, who looked into art to see the emanation of the subconscious, disregarded the larger realm of human consciousness and ignored the possibility of translating social relations into art.<sup>25</sup> For Klingender, Fry attempted to construct an autonomous sphere for art where the artist lived almost completely isolated from the 'realworldly'. Such artistic autonomy could be justifiable in Victorian society because the artist, by shutting himself off from false morality, was enabled to preserve his integrity and to provide a critical attitude. As a negative consequence of this position, the unification of art with the people remained an unsolved problem.

What was crucial for Richards's article was that Klingender defined the purpose of art as expressing 'the unity of opposites'. Klingender stated that, in portraying reality, art had to express the particular in order for it to attain universal significance:

Art is thus a striking and at the same time a particularly revealing illustration of the key conception of dialectics, the unity of opposites. For in art the particular becomes the general, the general reveals itself in the particular, and it is the unity of the particular and the general, expressed in the unity of content and form, which makes art an inexhaustible source of significant experience.<sup>26</sup>

Marxist theory, for Klingender, employed a dual standard to judge art. First it evaluated art with a relative standard based on the social conditions and the outlook of class it reflected, and second, it tested whether it contained a critical kernel of truth. Consequently Marxist theory did not necessarily condemn all bourgeois art as bad. Finding the 'modern movement' in art sterile, he pointed to a humanist and moral

tradition that existed in British art, starting with Hogarth's work, that expressed 'the interests and aspirations of the people' as well as allowing them access to art.<sup>27</sup>

This agenda was later to be embraced by other thinkers of the early New Left, such as E. P. Thompson in *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* (1955), Richard Hoggart in *The Uses of Literacy* (1957), and Raymond Williams in *Culture and Society 1780–1950* (1958), and in the rise of realism in British art promoted by critics like David Sylvester and John Berger.<sup>28</sup> James Hyman has argued that two main channels of realism were developed in British art after the war as a reaction to abstraction. He terms these 'modernist realism' and 'social realism'. Modernist realism resisted story-telling by emphasizing the metaphoric and the allusive via non-literary and non-illustrational depiction to distance itself from social and socialist realists. British social realism, however, had the ambition to 'rejuvenate notions of a national tradition of illustrative reportage' that stretched back to Hogarth. The critics that led the two currents, Sylvester in the case of modernist realism and Berger for social realism, were united in their criticism of the Continental art establishment in Paris and their resistance to Soviet and American cultures. As Hyman states, 'under-scoring each was a dialectical relationship between a desire to present British culture as hegemonic and attempts to forge a decentralized, European culture free from the dominance of a single nation or superpower'. Richards's position with reference to social realism and anonymity should be evaluated as a translation of this debate into the field of modern architecture in favour of the development of local responses and against internationalization.

The vernacular for Richards, then, was the kind of architecture that expressed the 'interests and the aspirations of the people' without the signature of the professional architect, free from the dominance of a single language, yet able to create a unified environment. In a healthy cultural transformation, Richards believed, a new vernacular would emerge from existing vernacular traditions to express people's ways-of-life with the aid of modern architecture's technological and programmatic infrastructure. Locally produced past vernaculars would help fulfil this need by supplying ahistorical and astylistic precedents.

AR's interest in 'the Functional Tradition' continued uninterrupted through the 1950s and 1960s, unaffected by a rapidly transforming outside context that saw the rise of New Brutalism. The polemic had a wide impact. For instance 'Den Funktionelle Tradition' was published as an offprint by *Arkitekten* in Denmark in 1951.

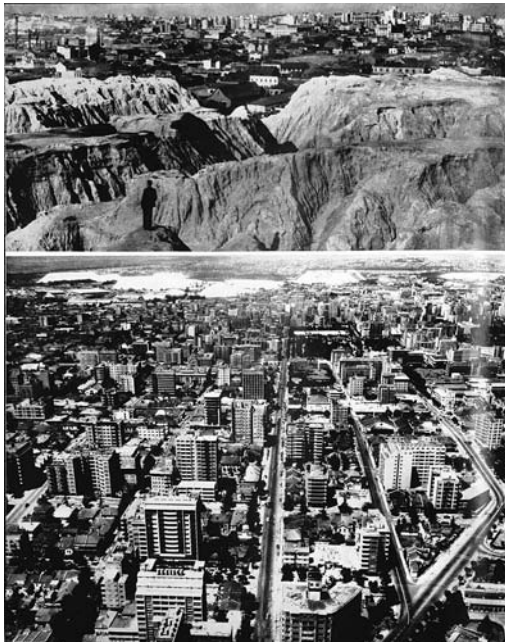
Richards was not alone in promoting anonymity via AR. Nikolaus Pevsner gave support to the cause. Pevsner's early interest in 'national characteristics' stemmed from his art-history education in Leipzig under the tutelage of Wilhelm Pinder. He was also highly influenced by Pinder's personality as a 'tireless popularizer driven by a cultural and political commitment'.<sup>29</sup> What is important for this chapter, however, is that *Kunstgeographie* grounded Pevsner's warning against the proliferation of a formulaic and monotonous International Style. In his *Pioneers of the Modern Movement* (1937) one of Pevsner's main concerns was to define the artist's role with reference to an artistic canon, the strength of which established cultural unity. He sympathized with the paternal socialism of Labour – mostly due to his belief in

William Morris's ideals – and the Victorian elite's dedication to public service. Later, in a talk titled 'Art for Everyone: Art and the State' and aired in June 1946, Labour's first year of government, Pevsner elaborated on the roles of the State, art and the artist with a view to the common good of society.<sup>30</sup> The facilitation of communication between the artist and the public, a social role previously managed by the church, had, he argued, to be taken up by 'the State, town councils and semi-public bodies'.<sup>31</sup> The State could wed the Morrisian principle of 'art for everyone by everyone' with concerns for visual education.<sup>32</sup>

In 1949, Pevsner set himself against Siegfried Giedion's promotion of the avant-garde as an agent of cultural progress in a harsh review of *Mechanisation Takes Command*, casting Giedion as a false prophet.<sup>33</sup> He implied that he arrogated it to himself to define the path of civilization instead of confining himself to the 'proper' limits of the art historian. Referring to Giedion's doctoral work, he argued that it employed Wölfflinian historiography at the expense of '*Kulturgeschichte*, *Geistesgeschichte* or *Sozialgeschichte*'.<sup>34</sup> For Pevsner, the architect had to cater to the needs of the community and work for the development of an anonymous culture. He argued that the twentieth-century avant-garde, as Giedion defined it, had become no more than the reincarnation of the culturally and politically detached nineteenth-century Romantic artist.<sup>35</sup> The architecture of this anonymous culture would largely emerge from the contemporary vernaculars produced by architects of social commitment (Figure 8.3).

In 1953, in a joint effort by Pevsner and Richards, *AR* started discussing contemporary architecture in the dominions with regard to the possible emergence of regional vernaculars. Concerned by the reduction of modern architecture to an

8.3  
Nikolaus  
Pevsner,  
'Johannesburg:  
The  
development of  
a contemporary  
vernacular in the  
Transvaal', the  
*Architectural  
Review*, June  
1953.



Nikolaus Pevsner

*In the struggle to consolidate and exploit the new architecture as a manner of everyday construction—often a more heroic battle than the original invention of the style—the Dominions are playing a vital, though sometimes unappreciated, part. In the article which follows Professor Pevsner draws attention to a hitherto unremarked phenomenon: the sudden appearance of 'a little Brazil within the Commonwealth.' For in Johannesburg a group of architects have evolved a contemporary vernacular for the many large buildings, mostly blocks of flats, which have been erected there since the War. The greater part of this development lies in the suburb of Hillbrow, seen opposite in two high-level views—one from the other towards, the glowing sand-tips which form a suitably exotic and dramatic complement to an urban extraordinary consistent in its use of a modern idiom.*

## JOHANNESBURG

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CONTEMPORARY VERNACULAR IN THE TRANSSAAL

The train climbs nearly 6,000 feet from Cape Town to Johannesburg. You travel through the vineyards and fruit plantations of the Cape Province, then up the Hex River, in serpentine as daring as those of the Gotthard route across the Alps, rising by two and a half thousand feet over a distance of 96 miles, and then you reach the Great Karoo, miles upon miles of flat, bare and barren table-land both sides of the railway track, untouched perhaps within eye-sight by any human hand, scarcely low growth, never tressed, red soil, red rocks, no water. The towns and villages, where there are any, are of low houses along wide, dusty, tree-lined streets. The hotel may be the only house rising to three stories, the *Lord Milner Hotel* for instance, at Marjiesfontein, 8,000 feet up. European population 120. But from Marjiesfontein it is still 620 miles to Johannesburg, 620 miles through the Central Karoo and then the Northern Karoo or the High Veld.

You stop at Kimberley, where they found the first diamonds in 1871 and still show you 'the largest man-made hole in the world,' a crater 1,200 feet deep, and finally reach that row in a west-east direction, and on which Johannesburg stretches out its suburbs, its location, its subsidiary towns, for something like 40 or 50 miles in one direction, for 7 or 8 in the other. Gold-mining has left its mark in handsome sand-tips and slime-dams of all sizes. The sand-tips are often conical, the slime-dams of a steeply tabular shape something like the world of Table Mountain. They say a number of them have already settled so firmly that one could build on them.

They also point at one of them or near one of them and tell you that there the first gold of the Rand was dug in 1883. The conical tips look very much like the white china-clay dumps of Cornwall, but vary in colour from a pale yellow to gold and sunset pink. They stand on your right and don't leave you, until the train pulls in at the station.

It is an untidy station, because it is obsolete in its size, and rebuilding lies before it. The old station still proudly displays its Imperial Roman looking bulk, by Gordon Lillie—old indeed, for the building dates back to about 1888. Now the designs for a new station have been approved. It will be modern and extensive and have all the most up-to-date facilities, separation of the rare long-distance traffic from the suburban traffic along the Rand, concentrated to maximum capacity in the rush hours, and of course another kind of separation, providing for the black their own entrances, booking-offices, cloak-rooms, luggage-counters and waiting-rooms. It will make a fine-looking group, though placed against the screen of a sixteen-storey block which in the present designs is rather schematically symmetrical.

But gone are the giant columns of Rome, America and St. Herbert's; gone, too, to make way for a straightforward idiom of today, handled apparently with complete ease and without any of the self-consciousness which in Europe might lead to a more sensitive, more personal design, or on the other hand to overdesigning. If you have not much work on a scale larger than that of a cottage or terrace of cottages, you tend to overdesign what you have to

issue of style by Henry Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, and by the proliferation of the International Style, Pevsner bemoaned the failure of architects to search consciously for particularized versions of the international idiom. Rather they stuck to narrow formulas: 'little independent thought had gone into the problem of marrying modern form with conditions of climates'.<sup>36</sup> In 1961, these articles were compiled into a book titled *New Buildings in the Commonwealth*. In the introduction, Richards explained that all the dominions represented in the book were expected to evolve a 'consistent architectural style of their own'. What Richards meant by this consistent architectural style was a local vernacular variant that remained loyal to the principles of modern architecture. In response to the brief sent by Pevsner and Richards, architects from the dominions evaluated the relation of local people to architecture, the state of architectural education, the spread of modern architecture, the development of the profession, the availability of traditional and modern materials to architects, and, with added emphasis, the possibility of a modern vernacular's emergence. Maxwell Fry, writing from West Africa, stated that the modern architect's task was 'creating a *regional character* answerable to local needs, a *dialect of internationalism*'.<sup>37</sup> Modern architecture's theoretical core, and its imperative to utilize new technology but not a limited aesthetic vocabulary codified under style, would serve as the grammar that underlaid these dialects. The move towards a regional vocabulary would allow modern architecture to address the sympathies of local communities and increase its popularity. While Pevsner pointed to the potential of an international modern architecture adapted to locales to provide regional diversity, Richards directed architects' attention to local and industrial vernaculars as inspiring precedents to achieve the same goal.

### The turn to cultural anthropology

Cultural anthropology was a fruitful resource for *AR* in convincing its readers of the universal validity of 'the Functional Tradition'. In February 1954, the magazine published an article by Alan Houghton Brodrick entitled 'Grass Roots: Huts, Igloos, Wigwams and Other Sources of the Functional Tradition'. Brodrick had been the Joint Secretary General of the International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences from 1934 to 1938. *AR*'s editorial introduction stated:

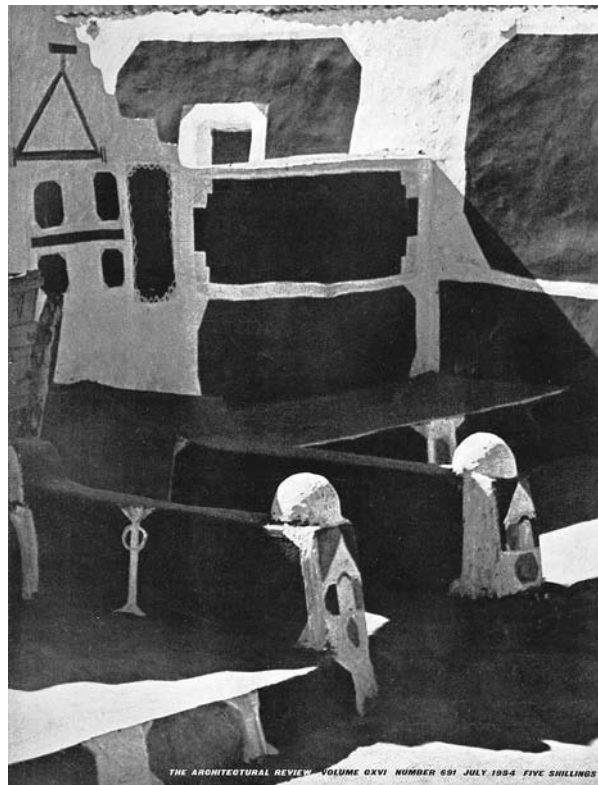
The forms of these dwellings are as diverse as the cultures which use them . . . Primitive societies live at the upper limit of their technological resources, civilized societies live, on a statistical average, well below theirs, and can therefore learn much that is useful and necessary from their less well-equipped brothers of the tropics, the Arctic and the steppe lands.<sup>38</sup>

Most probably authored by H. de C. Hastings, with his usual scepticism of science and technology, the editorial introduction asserted that the 'primitive builder' was a fiction just like 'his brother the noble savage' and invited modern architects to explore the efficiency, diversity and symbolism achieved by their 'primitive' brothers.

By directing its readers to the proofs of anthropology and situating the

discussion firmly under the generous umbrella of culture, *AR* diverted 'the Functional Tradition' from the realm of taste and ideology. In an intriguing allegory of modernity, *AR* ran a cover story in the same year based on the colourful architecture of the South Ndebele people, to the north of Pretoria in South Africa (Figure 8.4).

Some of these people, which the *AR* referred to as M'Pogga and Bantu, had been forcibly moved to make way for an airport in 1953. In their new settlement they were unable to find the building materials to which they were accustomed. Instead of using thatch, they started to build with mud brick and whitewash.<sup>39</sup> *AR*'s editorial introduction stressed that 'a people with long-standing traditions of its own, living on the fringe of Western culture' had established a memorable built environment in a land that they had inhabited for a very brief period. In their new buildings they borrowed 'figurative and abstract elements from every level of *the cultural experience of a people suspended, temporarily between two ways of life*'.<sup>40</sup> What was common to the modern subject was this suspended, transitional state of life. The moral of the story was that in order for modern architecture to satisfy the demands of people who participate in a certain culture, it had to adapt itself to the 'cultural pattern'. The remedy that the Ndebele found in exile was to reconcile an existing architectural language with new building technologies and materials. When left to themselves, the example proved, people created edifices that transferred cultural memory from one place to the other. Architecture, as the inheritor of cultural



8.4  
South African  
Ndebele  
architecture, the  
*Architectural  
Review* cover,  
July 1954.



memory, could help us to adapt to modernity, and the transition between 'two ways of life' could be smoothed, easing the sense of suspension.

*AR*'s editorial subscribed to a type of cultural particularism developed by the anthropologist Franz Boas and his followers Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead, who studied culture as an integrated way of life. Benedict saw culture as a systematic body of learnt behaviour. She believed that modern people could better see their own socially transmitted behaviour, as well as understand the difference of standards between different cultures, through comparative studies of so-called 'primitive' cultures. 'Primitive' cultures were accepted as laboratories of modern social problems set in simpler terms which allowed identification of 'cradle traits' fundamental to all human thinking.<sup>41</sup> The Ndebele represented the original human mind and its architectural desires, demonstrating how the subconscious of the modern subject operated.

'The Functional Tradition' came back in another special issue in July 1957, this time drawing on the simple conventional architecture of the nineteenth-century that responded to the Industrial Revolution's utilitarian programmes. Against the concrete grain elevators and silos of white, plain, unadorned surfaces that inspired an earlier generation of modern architects, Richards pitched a new set of precedents, such as warehouses and breweries built of brick, wood, stone and iron, and covered with pitched roofs. In other words, Richards was challenging the stylistic vocabulary and imagery codified by pre-war modern architectural discourse, and the popularity of New Brutalism at the same time. The highly successful book that followed the special issue in July 1957 came out in 1958 from the Architectural Press. It was later regarded as an important contribution to the birth of industrial archaeology, diverting attention from Richards's central intentions.<sup>42</sup> The book owed its success to a visual essay composed of brilliant photographs by Eric de Maré (1910–2002), a massively influential architectural photographer of the post-war period and a major actor in *AR*'s visual education effort (Figure 8.5).

'The Functional Tradition' was expected to have a 'taming' influence on the anti-aesthetics advanced by 'New Brutalism'. Banham's defining essay published in *AR* in December 1955 set 'memorability of image, clear exhibition of structure and valuation of materials as found' as the fundamental principles of 'New Brutalism'.<sup>43</sup> These qualities were those that Richards appreciated most in the industrial structures of 'the Functional Tradition'. Against Banham's portrayal of New Brutalism as the birth of an English avant-garde current, Richards saw it as a trend inspired by the post-war work of Le Corbusier, just like Hunstanton School was interpreted as a successful derivation of Mies's work, in smooth continuity with modern architecture.<sup>44</sup> For him New Brutalism was a return to modern architecture's first principles, proudly English, not a radical rupture that could define modern architecture anew. Richards's attempt to establish a link of inspiration between 'the Functional Tradition' and the early work of the Smithsons, especially for Hunstanton School and the Sugden House, was soon met with protest. Readers' letters pointed to the discrepancy between *AR*'s representation of the Smithsons in terms of continuity versus Banham's and their own self-promotion as the new English avant-garde. In September 1957, one reader urged the editors to refrain from implying a relationship between the 'conscious,

**8.5**

The Albert Dock  
in Liverpool.  
Photograph by  
Eric de Maré,  
1957, reproduced  
in J. M. Richards,  
*The Functional  
Tradition*  
(London, 1958).



educated casualness of the New Brutalists' and the 'spontaneous quality' of anonymous architecture.<sup>45</sup>

In featuring Stirling and Gowan's Ham Common Flats, however, the editors were convinced that British architects were moving towards the creation of a sophisticated vernacular. In 1960 James Stirling published an article, 'The Functional Tradition and Expression', in *Perspecta* that set him apart from those who saw New Brutalism as the neo-avant-garde that finally put British modern architecture on the map.<sup>46</sup> Stirling contextualized the qualities of anonymous architecture in the post-war work of Le Corbusier and in his own partnership with Gowan, almost confirming Richards. Acknowledging the influence of De Stijl and the Jaoul houses as inspiring precedents to the flats of Ham Common, he admitted a particular fascination with the 'vernacular brick buildings such as the Liverpool warehouses and the great virtuosity of English nineteenth-century brick technology'.<sup>47</sup> Stirling agreed with *AR*'s genealogy that buildings of 'the Functional Tradition' were 'suggestive of the early ideas of Functionalism but less of the machine aesthetic, which was primarily a style concern'. His analysis of the nineteenth-century industrial vernaculars emphasized possibilities of alternative expression via volumetric arrangement, the display of structural members and robust materiality via textural quality – 'an unsophisticated but successful integration of large and small elements with a degree of inevitability'.<sup>48</sup> Here was an attempt to reconcile 'the Functional Tradition' with a new modernist architectural language in the work of an architect who set himself apart from the rhetorical avant-gardism of New Brutalism by situating his work with reference to 'anonymous' historical precedent.

The duality set by Pevsner at the beginning of *An Outline of European*

*Architecture* (1943), which was adopted by Richards throughout his career, Lincoln Cathedral versus the bicycle shed as architecture versus building, was reinforced by cultural anthropology's categorization of architecture as the communitarian versus the vernacular.<sup>49</sup> This correlated with the dynamics of culture theorized by T. S. Eliot: an elusive dialogue existed between high culture ('Modern Architecture') and low culture (vernacular architectures/building) and a dynamic boundary was in constant reconfiguration. Eliot believed that it was possible to intervene in this dynamic if the elite developed and implemented 'proper' cultural policies that would safeguard the existence of the two cultures and their dialogue. Reluctant to give space to the rise of mass culture and media in the late 1950s and the first half of the 1960s, *AR* stressed instead the art that was produced by ordinary people themselves, as featured in the 'Pub Tradition', 'Fishermen Net-Shelters' and 'The Unsophisticated Arts' series of the 1950s by Barbara Jones. Instead of mass habits of consumption and their impact on design, *AR*'s editors were interested in the everyday habits of producing the so-called minor arts and their contribution to the larger framework of culture (Figure 8.6).<sup>50</sup> The continued allocation of space to vernacular buildings in the journal was not, therefore, simply a nostalgic move yearning for a return to a harmonious architectural culture. The editors, especially Richards, saw it rather as their duty to perpetuate this dialogue between high culture and low culture – or modern architecture and vernacular architecture – especially at a time when low culture was endangered by mass culture.

While Banham and the Independent Group perceived culture as a broad front that embraced the diversity of consumption habits and media culture, and argued that regional traditions of craft were destined to die, Richards saw mass culture as a force that dragged cultural diversity into uniformity. Vernacular architecture was but one vital component of that diversity. Bernard Rudofsky's Museum of Modern Art exhibition, 'Architecture without Architects', in 1964 saw vernacular architecture accepted into the sanctuaries of high culture. Thereafter Richards's interest was increasingly directed to the development of a contextualist and preservationist sensitivity in modern architecture.<sup>51</sup>

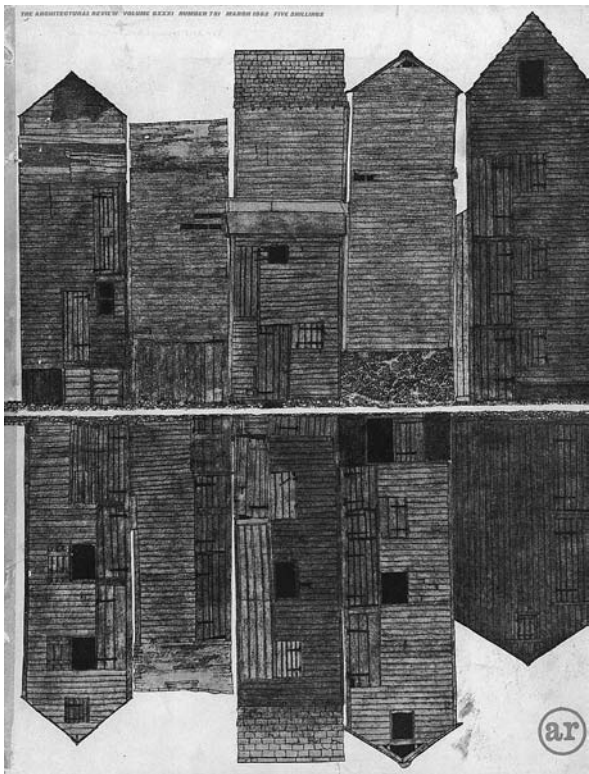
### **Conclusion: the hollow victory**

When 'The Functional Tradition' was published in book form in 1958 Richards defined a task for the modern architect, an agenda that clearly demonstrates why the book is misclassified as the first book on industrial archaeology:

New and more sophisticated standards are achieved gradually and unselfconsciously as one anonymous mind after another applies itself to the modification of an established pattern. *That is how all styles of architecture perfect themselves, and our problem is to set this procedure satisfactorily in motion at a very difficult moment in history . . .* Architecture's special need now is to perfect such a vernacular, even in the face of the difficulty that it means achieving the unselfconscious virtues in an age peculiar for its self-consciousness.<sup>52</sup>

8.6

Two views of a group of fishermen's net shelters in Hastings, Sussex. Top: photograph by Eric de Maré, 1956, reproduced in the *Architectural Review's* article on 'the Functional Tradition', September 1957. Bottom: the *Architectural Review* cover of March 1962 by Gordon Cullen.



The developments of the 1960s were not entirely friendly to this agenda. The rise of consumer culture and the increasing popularity of neo-avant-garde groups like Team X and Archigram against the backdrop of New Brutalism's spread to become a ubiquitous international language was probably the exact opposite of what the editorial board at *AR* promoted. To resist this domination, Richards continued *AR*'s emphasis on the world's vernaculars through articles specifically targeting environments where stylistic unity was observed to arise from the continuation of vernacular building traditions.<sup>53</sup> To his earlier emphasis on people's architecture he added the encouragement of self-help and the economical propriety of local technologies – 'reinforced but not supplanted by modern technology' – to maximize the use of existing resources. Although his editorial introductions were imbued with a sense of nostalgia that harked back to a communitarian cultural unity expressed through the vernacular, Richards believed that the empowerment of a local economy ensured the preservation of continuity and the creation of familiar settings.<sup>54</sup>

In a lecture given to the Royal Australian Institute of Architects in 1970, shortly before he retired from *AR*, Richards outlined a new trajectory for modern architecture. At a time when advocacy planning and self-build were acquiring popularity he reframed his views on user participation and the social obligations of architecture, the possible impacts of industrialization and his categorization of architecture as the anonymous versus the symbolic. Richards's lecture was structured as a brief review of modern architecture's history, permeated by a sense of frustration as he evaluated a progression of 'fashion and style', when style for modern architecture should only be a by-product.<sup>55</sup>

Richards's lecture in Australia was an early version of his 'annual discourse' of 1972 at the Royal Institute of British Architects entitled 'The Hollow Victory'. This was received by many as his renunciation of modern architecture.<sup>56</sup> It was a provocative and auto-critical talk, and a condemnation of decades of modern architecture in Britain. Richards bemoaned his shared responsibility for having encouraged modern architecture's anti-historical foundations. As he saw it, modern architecture's main objective, to create a new relationship between architecture and society, was obscured by emphasis on the aesthetic and a relentless search for novelty of expression. This inhibited the dissemination of the culture of modern architecture and its favourable reception.<sup>57</sup> Richards blamed art history's emphasis on 'change and geniuses' for undermining the value of anonymity and held art historiography responsible for the rise of 'the celebrity architect'. There was only dim hope for a new vernacular to overcome the pluralistic, image-based consumption culture fed by the mass media and its culture industry:

A vernacular language is in any case the product of a particular social situation. The Georgian vernacular of one hundred and fifty years ago was so widely spread because the masses accepted whatever the educated admired, and the question we must ask now is whether, in our self-conscious age, we can expect to look forward to a vernacular architectural language in a Georgian sense. We already have the popular vernaculars of the spec builder's housing estate and the caravan park;

does our contemporary culture, with its differences of internal tempo and its acceptance of continually changing fashion, with its enjoyment of allusive images such as those which form the basis of pop art, require a single visual language to be spoken in all places and at all times?<sup>58</sup>

When the paternal organization of society was irretrievably lost during the mass affluence of the 1960s, and when identities were increasingly shaped by habits of consumption, preservation rose to become for Richards the sole protector of continuity in the environment. As long as the resources of technology were not assimilated into a social culture of preservation, cultural continuity would be impossible to sustain in the built environment. The logical action to stem the tide against continuity would then be a redefinition of the role of the modern architect, to recharge and set a new course by declaring that 'the battle for modern architecture' had actually been lost, and that modernism's victory was hollow.<sup>59</sup> The new modern architect would be defined by 'humility', and his willingness to conform to an established pattern. Proposing the reintegration of the previous pupilage system into architectural education to develop this humility, Richards suggested that architects be localized and buildings be supervised in these locales by a single architect in order to oversee unity of expression. The local architect would then be administered both by the professional organization and the public, and architecture would be redefined as a profession of civil service operating under a cultural consensus. An ideological consensus on the social and professional role of the architect would be imposed from the outside as the public's will, involving the public in architecture and obliging the architect to be responsible towards a local constituency.

In the late 1950s and 1960s *AR*'s resistance to 'pop' stemmed directly from its scepticism towards 'mass culture' as defined with reference to the 'popularly consumed' by the likes of Banham or the Independent Group. By denying popular agency, the culture of consumption provided no solution to alienation, which Richards thought was at the source of 'cultural decay'. Banham's belief that the consumer had a critical potential merely through being able to choose from options in the market was not convincing. For Richards, the elevation of 'pop' overlooked the passivity of consumers. It should be noted, however, that a concept of the 'popular' as 'collectively made' and Banham's call for the 'popular' to be what was 'popularly consumed' were mutually exclusive. Banham simply dismissed the collectively made as due to 'traditional lore' and as out of tune with the *Zeitgeist*, denying the technologies that produced the popular any future use or chance of survival. In contrast, the scepticism that *AR* had for consumer culture sought to undermine the culture industry's power, which prevented any possible critical resistance by the consumer.

Richards and the rest of *AR*'s editorial board promoted 'anonymity' in the realm of architecture and urban design in an attempt to protect popular culture against being subsumed by mass culture, and in seeking possibilities within architecture and urban design for cultural continuity. According to Raymond Williams, the processes of culture bring forward a continual selection and reselection of ancestors and a competition between the agents that make this selection. *AR* was a strong agent, and Richards its outspoken editor in this competition. Williams adds

that the practice of recording and the absorption of these records into a tradition inevitably end up defining a culture different from the one that was actually lived, hence the reinterpretation of a vernacular within a new technological infrastructure would produce a new vernacular. A new 'anonymity' could foster reconciliation between culture as anthropology, as 'ways of life' or 'structures of feeling', and culture as aesthetic – that is culture as the arts, a reconciliation which Richards hoped to achieve by allocating space to promoting vernacular precedents within a modernist architecture journal. He pointed outside the narrow realm of architecture defined by high culture, to recognize the creative energies of folk culture (including popular arts and vernacular architecture) as well as those of 'primitive' communities, and aimed to direct these energies to society as a whole via architecture and urban design.<sup>60</sup> The emphasis on contextual continuity of 'Townscape' and the emphasis on historical continuity of 'the Functional Tradition' aimed to sustain 'the particular ways of life' manifested in the anonymous qualities of the built environment. *AR*'s casebook approach, which defined 'The Functional Tradition' and 'Townscape' sections, provided an open-ended platform to accumulate precedents that would inspire the endurance of continuity but also accommodate change.

The erasure of the difference between high culture and low culture via anonymity carries a certain paradox into the production of architecture, be it the contextual anonymity that Richards advocated, or the technological anonymity that Banham promoted after announcing the death of New Brutalism. The logical conclusion of the anonymity that Richards advocated would be the dissolution of 'Architecture', through the adoption of local technologies and the sharing of the architectural vocabulary of place. It would also lead to the disappearance of the 'Architect' in favour of the builder, policy maker or enabler of community-building production. One might see 'critical regionalism' as defined by Kenneth Frampton as an attempt to overcome this paradox. In contrast, the technological anonymity that Banham advocated by way of 'Archigram', the 'well-tempered environment', and 'Non-Plan' leads to the dissolution of 'Architecture' in infrastructure. It reduces the role of the architect to that of a technician struggling to preserve status among a proliferating mass of technicians responsible for architectural production.

In 'Revenge of the Picturesque: English Architectural Polemics, 1945–1965' (1968), written as part of a series of essays dedicated to Pevsner, Reyner Banham condemned *AR*'s editors, Richards and Pevsner, for having 'thrown principle to the wind' when the younger generation returned from the war.<sup>61</sup> He asserted that these two 'leading oracles of modern architecture' had started to 'espouse the most debased English habits of compromise and sentimentality' in the post-war period. He also cited the Smithsons' collaboration with Gordon Cullen for the Economist Building in 1965 as complicity with the 'Establishment', marking the death of New Brutalism. Alluding to the promotion of the Picturesque in *AR*'s post-war editorial campaigns Banham concluded that the 'Picturesque faction' had then, in essence, defeated the New Brutalists through an infiltration of their design thinking.<sup>62</sup> 'So total [had] been the triumph of the unacknowledged Picturesqueness of the Picturesque's avowed enemies'.<sup>63</sup>

Although Banham's essay provides an accurate portrayal of principal

issues in architectural debates in the space of a nine-page essay, it is far from providing deeper insight into the impact of *AR*'s 'Townscape' and 'the Functional Tradition'. Banham's attribution of victory to the Picturesque faction makes Richards's pronouncement that the victory of modern architecture was 'hollow' four years later all the more surprising. How can one explain this disillusionment in the spokesmen of both the 'younger generation' and the 'Establishment', an opposition that has created much material for British architectural history? By invoking a conspiracy of betrayal against modern architecture perhaps, one devised by those who were the most ardent advocates of modern architecture in the 1930s? Or, as Richards implies, by seeing a betrayal by the post-war generation that abandoned the ideals of the 1930s in order to replace them with its own version of modern architecture? The answer will probably seal a major discussion in the architectural history of post-war Britain.

### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank the Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain (SAHGB) for making possible the presentation of an earlier version of this paper at the Annual Symposium of the SAHGB in May 2008 organized in collaboration with the Vernacular Architecture Group. I am grateful to Peter Guillery for all his contributions and encouragement in bringing the paper to publication. Many thanks to Matthew Wickens for scanning the images from the *Architectural Review*.

### **Notes**

- 1 J. M. Crook, 'Sir James Richards (1907–92): A Bibliographical Tribute', *Architectural History*, 42 (1999), pp. 354–74.
- 2 Italics mine.
- 3 J. M. Richards, *Memoirs of an Unjust Fella* (London, 1980), p. 119.
- 4 J. M. Richards, 'The Condition of Architecture and the Principle of Anonymity', in *Circle: International Survey of Constructive Art* (London, 1937), p. 184 and in *Circle: International Survey of Constructive Art*, eds J. Leslie Martin *et al.* (New York, 1937). *Circle* was first intended as an art magazine to be published by Faber and Faber, but it was later published as a book. Contributors included British artists as well as émigré artists who were in Britain at the time. *Circle* brought together the work of a range of painters, sculptors, architects and thinkers, to survey 'emerging cultural unity' in the words of Naum Gabo. *Circle* was not a manifesto and the contributors were from diverse backgrounds subscribing to varying positions – such as historians/critics Lewis Mumford, Siegfried Giedion and J. M. Richards, or painters and sculptors like Ben Nicholson, Barbara Hepworth and Henry Moore, or architects like Walter Gropius, J. Leslie Martin and Alberto Sartoris. Le Corbusier also submitted an essay classified under painting. In 1982 an exhibition in Kettle's Yard Gallery commemorated the journal and constructive art. See ed. J. Lewison, *Circle: Constructive Art in Britain 1934–40* (Cambridge, 1982).
- 5 '[T]here is much truth in the latter allegation if it means that Western architecture is too often an architects', not a people's, architecture. For connoisseurship of modern architecture is still largely confined to the professional man and the intelligentsia. This is a defect that time and modern architecture's own ability to cultivate the graces on which popular appreciation rest should succeed in remedying. People generally, not only architects, can be taught to look forward. . . . The weakness of the Soviet attitude was that it opened no window on the future'. J. M. Richards, *An Introduction to Modern Architecture* (Harmondsworth, 1940), p. 102.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 124.
- 7 *Ibid.*



- 8 Ibid., p. 129.
- 9 J. M. Richards, *The Castles on the Ground: The Anatomy of Suburbia*, 2nd edn (London, 1973), pp. 17–18.
- 10 Ibid., p. 36.
- 11 Ibid., p. 89.
- 12 'Reconstruction in the USSR', *AR*, 101(1947), pp. 177–8.
- 13 David Arkin, 'Some Thoughts on Reconstruction', *AR*, 101 (1947), pp. 178–9.
- 14 The Zhdanovist line was initiated in the Union Congress of Soviet Writers held in Moscow in 1934, and drafted into a resolution in 1946 by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union by the Party Secretary and cultural boss Andrey Aleksandrovich Zhdanov. Although Zhdanov died in 1948, his principles ruled until Stalin's death in 1953.
- 15 '[I]t is the artistic taste shown in contemporary Russian architecture – and for that matter, in the other arts as well – which other nations find most puzzling . . . [other nations] see Russia as the example of a country where no building takes place but by order of the State; and the designer – town-planner, architect or decorator – is wholly dependent on the State; and seeing that, according to sophisticated European Standards, Russian buildings appear bourgeois and retrogressive, they wonder whether this is the inevitable result of extensive State patronage – whether the rule of the official does not by its nature result in leveling down to an uninspired mediocrity'. Ibid.
- 16 See Richards's account of the congress in *Memoirs*, pp. 198–200. Looking back to the 1950s in *The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic* (London, 1966), Reyner Banham would categorize *AR*'s support for New Empiricism in social-democratic Sweden as the 'Anglo-Zhdanov line', an assessment which might be evaluated as highly biased in the light of Richards's position. The split between modern architects in Britain in the post-war period had become most visible in the London County Council's Department of Architecture. This split was later embodied in the stylistic duality between the eastern and the western halves of the Alton Estate housing project in Roehampton. For a short account of this split see Stefan Muthesius and Miles Glendinning, *Tower Block: Modern Public Housing in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland* (London, 1994), pp. 104–9.
- 17 J. M. Richards, 'The Next Step?', *AR*, 107 (1950), p. 168.
- 18 Ibid., p. 180.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Before 'The Functional Tradition' was prepared as a special issue the role of vernaculars in the built environment was explored in *AR* in two shorter sections, one on Britain's canals and the other on the 'Pub tradition'. *AR* also organized a competition for hypothetical pub designs for architects to analyse the local pub as a vernacular type, determine its material and spatial characteristics and reinterpret it within the vocabulary of modern architecture. See 'The Pub Tradition Recaptured', *AR*, 107 (1950), pp. 383–96.
- 21 'The Functional Tradition', *AR*, 107 (1950), special issue.
- 22 Ibid., p. 65.
- 23 Lewis Mumford, 'The Sky Line: Status Quo', *New Yorker*, 11 Oct. 1947, pp. 104–10.
- 24 Klingender's activities were scrutinized by MI5 until his death in 1955, but he was not suspected of being a dangerous Marxist according to [www.mi5.gov.uk/output/communists-and-suspected-communists.html#klingender] (accessed 27 May 2010).
- 25 Francis D. Klingender, *Marxism and Modern Art: An Approach to Social Realism* (London, 1943), p. 7. It was published in New York in 1945.
- 26 Ibid., p. 23.
- 27 'With the appearance of Hogarth in the early eighteenth century British painting lost its provincial backwardness and assumed a leading role in Europe. Hogarth's art is essentially "moral" i.e. it is constantly and intimately concerned with social life. This social interest survived in the marvelous school of British caricature based on Hogarth which reflected the interests and the aspirations of our people from the time of the South Sea Bubble to the rise of Chartism . . . as soon as this vital

- substratum of popular, socially conscious art had disappeared, British art as a whole relapsed into provincial eclecticism'. Klingender, *Marxism*, p. 11.
- 28 See James Hyman, *The Battle for Realism: Figurative Art in Britain during the Cold War 1945–1960* (London, 2001).
- 29 Ibid., p. 107.
- 30 Nikolaus Pevsner, 'Art for Everyone: Art and the State', 16, 18 and 19 June 1946. The producer was Noni Wright. The talk was aired on Pacific Service, African Service and North American service respectively. A copy of the script was supplied to me by the BBC Written Archives.
- 31 Herbert Read (1893–1968), one of the foremost critics of his time, had an anarchist agenda for the promotion of modern art and literature. He wrote articles for *AR*, probably via invitations from Richards and Pevsner. Richards and Read helped found the Institute of Contemporary Arts. For more on Read, see James King, *The Last Modern: A Life of Herbert Read* (London, 1990) and ed. David Goodway, *Herbert Read Reassessed* (Liverpool, 1998).
- 32 For Pevsner the activities of the Council for Visual Education stimulated the interest of the local people the artwork was intended to serve, and supplied patronage for young and local artists, establishing a social role for community art. The Council published Pevsner's pamphlet, *Visual Pleasures from Everyday Things: An Attempt to Establish Criteria by Which the Aesthetic Qualities of Design Can Be Judged* (London, 1946).
- 33 Nikolaus Pevsner, 'Judges VI, 34', *AR*, 106 (1949), pp. 77–9. In this article he differentiated himself from Siegfried Giedion in terms of the historian's role as well as in terms of historiography. The article reflected the clash of the two historians' opposing projects. Pevsner started the article with 'Judges VI, 34', the biblical verse, the first part of which he quoted as an epigraph: 'But the spirit of the Lord came upon Giedion [*sic*] and he blew a trumpet'.
- 34 'But the combination of historiography and propaganda has its dangers, and Dr Giedion has not always escaped them. What has established him in his precarious and fascinating position is a matter of peculiar personal experiences. He took his degree with Wölfflin, of all art historians of the twentieth century the most convinced that art history is a history of visual matters exclusively and should not be disturbed by any *Kulturgeschichte*, *Geistesgeschichte* or *Sozialgeschichte* – history of culture representing the trend of the nineteenth century which culminated in Wölfflin's own master Burckhardt, history of thought representing what came to the fore with the most inspiring art historians slightly his younger, with Dvorak and Pinder, and social history representing what began to haunt those who only started when he was sixty'. Ibid., p. 77.
- 35 For a more detailed discussion of Pevsner's review of Giedion's book, see Erdem Erten, 'Shaping the Second Half Century: The Architectural Review 1947–1971' (doctoral thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2004).
- 36 Nikolaus Pevsner, 'Commonwealth 1', *AR*, 142 (1959).
- 37 E. Maxwell Fry, 'West Africa', in J. M. Richards and Nikolaus Pevsner, *New Buildings in the Commonwealth* (London, 1961), p. 103, italics mine.
- 38 Alan Houghton Brodrick, 'Grass Roots: Huts, Igloos, Wigwams and Other Sources of the Functional Tradition', *AR*, 115 (1954), pp. 101–11.
- 39 Betty Spence and Barrie Biermann, 'M'Pogga', *AR*, 116 (1954), pp. 34–40. M'Pogga is now considered a derogatory form of address by the Ndebele. See [www.sahistory.org.za/pages/artsmediaculture/culture%20&%20heritage/kwamsiza/earlyHistory.htm (accessed 15 November 2009)]. I would like to thank Peter Guillery for directing me to these sources.
- 40 Ibid., p. 36, italics mine.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 'The Functional Tradition as Shown in Early Industrial Buildings', *AR*, 122 (1957), special issue; J. M. Richards, *The Functional Tradition* (London, 1958).
- 43 'These are found to be a strongly moralistic attitude to structure, in its widest sense, and materials in their crudest sense, coupled with a desire to render every building with a memorable visual

- image'. See the editorial introduction to Reyner Banham, 'The New Brutalism', *AR*, 118 (1955), pp. 354–61.
- 44 The Hunstanton School was reviewed by Philip Johnson for *AR*. The editors deemed Johnson a true Miesian and thus the most appropriate reviewer. See *AR*, 116 (1954), pp. 149–62. Letters from readers found the building 'utterly unenglish'.
- 45 See correspondence in *AR*'s September 1957 issue.
- 46 Also see John McKean's account of Stirling's disassociation from New Brutalism in John McKean, *Leicester University Engineering Building* (London, 1994).
- 47 James Stirling, 'The Functional Tradition and Expression', *Perspecta*, 6 (1960), p. 89.
- 48 *Ibid.*, p. 91.
- 49 'A bicycle shed is a building; Lincoln cathedral is a piece of architecture. Nearly everything that encloses space on a scale sufficient for a human being to move in is a building; the term architecture applies only to buildings designed with a view to aesthetic appeal'. Nikolaus Pevsner, *An Outline of European Architecture*, 7th edn (Harmondsworth, 1963), p. 15.
- 50 These series were later published in Barbara Jones, *The Unsophisticated Arts* (London, 1951).
- 51 Rudofsky's exhibition (9 November 1964 to 7 February 1965) was received as a pleasant contribution 'to a cause that the readers of *AR* had been familiar with' for about a decade. See the short mention of 'Architecture without Architects' in the 'World' section of *AR*'s December 1966 issue.
- 52 J. M. Richards, *The Functional Tradition in Early Industrial Buildings* (London, 1958), p. 18.
- 53 For instance, the architecture of Malta was featured as a synthesis of the vernacular and the modern several times between 1965 and 1970 via the work of Richard England. See 'Building on Rock: Malta', *AR*, April 1965; 'A Modern Vernacular in Malta', *AR*, August 1965, pp. 143–5; 'England Rocks', *AR*, December 1966, front cover and p. 391; and, finally, the special July 1969 issue on Malta.
- 54 Richards's interest was increasingly directed to different cultures and vernacular architectures in *AR* in the second half of the sixties. See 'Traditional Architecture of Ceylon', February 1966, 'The Painted Churches of Moldavia', March 1966, 'Finnish Vernacular', January 1968, and 'Gourn', February 1970.
- 55 'The course of recent architectural history, for the public that tries to follow it, is largely a history of fashion and style . . . the only thing that matters about modern architecture is its ability intelligibly to apply available means to scientifically ascertained needs, and that style is only a by-product'. See J. M. Richards, *A Critic's View* (Victoria, Australia, 1971).
- 56 Richards, *Memoirs*.
- 57 'The modern architect's persistent search after novelty helped to prevent the growth of an informed body of public opinion'. J. M. Richards, 'The Hollow Victory', *RIBA Journal*, May 1972, p. 195.
- 58 *Ibid.*
- 59 'We are no nearer than the Victorians were to achieving a vernacular language that the man in the street as well as the architect regards as right and inevitable. In this sense, it is nonsense to assert that the battle for modern architecture has now been won'. *Ibid.*, p. 193.
- 60 See Terry Eagleton, *The Idea of Culture* (Oxford, 2000), p. 18.
- 61 Banham refers to the emergence of concepts such as indeterminacy, topographical sensitivity, endlessness, etc. in architectural design theory. Reyner Banham, 'Revenge of the Picturesque: English Architectural Polemics, 1945–1965', in *Concerning Architecture: Essays on Architectural Writers and Writing Presented to Nikolaus Pevsner*, ed. John Summerson (London, 1968), pp. 265–73.
- 62 Gordon Cullen, 'The Economist Buildings, St. James's', *AR*, 137 (1965), pp. 114–24.
- 63 Banham, 'Revenge'.

## Chapter 9

# A Modernist Vernacular?

## The Hidden Diversity of Post-War Council Housing

*Miles Glendinning*

### **Introduction: unity or diversity?**

Today, of all aspects of the cultural landscape bequeathed to us by the disciplined, collectivist state of the mid-twentieth century in Europe, the one widely seen as most emblematic of its supposedly alienating homogeneity and mechanistic dirigisme is the surviving landscape of the mass-housing programme, still vast in extent in many countries. Usually treated, at best, with benign neglect (Russia, France) and, at worst, with active denigration and mass demolition (former East Germany), this mass-housing legacy is widely branded 'all the same', and often 'all bad', in both its state-driven socio-political aspects and in its modernist architecture – in the latter case, despite the recent revival of interest in the Modern Movement, focused on commodifiable 'icons' rather than collectivist programmes.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter sets out to challenge the preconception of homogeneous sameness – socio-political and aesthetic – that underlies this argument, and to suggest possible repercussions in the world of 'built heritage'. It focuses on the case study of the UK, aiming to show that even within the territory of a single state, a vast and hitherto-unknown diversity of mass housing awaits discovery – a diversity structured by tensions between local and national state agencies (including Britain's special tradition of municipal power) and between 'production' and 'design' oriented professionals, mostly employed by the various agencies of the state.<sup>2</sup>

But does this largely unconscious, unstructured diversity amount to a kind of 'modern vernacular'? At first glance, that might seem a rather far-fetched claim. Under the present pejorative caricature of 'homogeneous' twentieth-century state housing, the latter is seen as something essentially non-place-specific, and thus certainly sharply opposed to the time-honoured, mainly architectural concept of the 'vernacular', as something not only intensely place-specific, but also not stemming from processes of intellectual calculation.<sup>3</sup> But this latter boundary is an advancing frontier. Increasingly, the once fiercely criticized national and regional cultures

spawned by Victorian capitalist modernity, the urban landscapes and 'industrial archaeology' of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, are being relatively easily brought in under the same cosy umbrella as the traditional vernacular diversities of the pre-'Improvement' era – even though those everyday Victorian environments largely resulted from modern, systematizing, rational processes, and were often consciously 'designed'. Could the same principles be applied to the mass environments of the great post-war reconstruction?<sup>4</sup>

The main line of argument of this chapter is that, if we are to identify a 'vernacular' diversity in the state-dominated post-war period, it can no longer simply be identified with 'local' and 'non-designed' elements. Instead, we have to acknowledge that this diversity, by the mid-twentieth century, had complicated itself into a vast international continuum in all directions, including innumerable different forms of definition – geographical, intellectual, socio-politico-economic and so forth – and all constantly shifting. This led to numerous overlaps and hybridities – for example the same place could be a 'centre' and a 'periphery' at the same time. Take London. In the 1930s and 1940s it was economically and politically the unchallenged centre of a huge and in some ways highly centralized system of social-housing production; yet within the intellectual structure of the Modern Movement, quite an insecure and peripheral place. From the 1950s, with the much publicized advances of public-housing architecture there, that all changed. Yet alongside the avant-garde prestige of the housing architecture of the London County Council (LCC), there were strong peripheral elements, in the form of some of the weaker metropolitan boroughs, which organized 'local housing operations' until 1965; and the 1960s era of system building saw London as a whole fall far 'behind', in its reliance on traditional competitive tendered contracts.

In this chapter, I expand on this theme of the diversity and polycentricity that flourished under the state umbrella, presenting an overview of the post-war mass-housing drive within a case study of the UK. This encompasses both the several divergent 'national systems' within the one state (especially the huge contrast between state housing policy in Britain and Northern Ireland) and the countless local variations in both the organization and the architecture of housing. At the end, I return again briefly to definitions of the vernacular, and to the question of how far it can credibly be applied to the mass-housing environments of this era.

### **International context: modernist housing in Western Europe**

In the main body of the chapter, I present a broad overview of the post-Second World War mass-housing drive within the UK, grouping the countless local variations in both the organization and the architecture of housing into three general approaches. Let us begin, though, by looking at the national picture – because, traditionally, one of the key features attributed to the vernacular by the architectural commentators who initially defined it has been not only regional and local but also national distinctiveness – as expressed in late nineteenth-century terms like 'national romanticism' or the 'Old English' style. There were some very strong, nationally unifying factors in the post-war 'housing drive' – for example, the very fact that we talk about a 'housing drive' at all, something that would have been incomprehensible in the nineteenth

century. But let us also very briefly put this into a wider international comparative context, pinpointing some special characteristics of mass housing in Britain as opposed to other European or Western countries, taking in not just architecture but also society, just as in the nineteenth century the Arts and Crafts people hailed medieval architecture not just for its supposed organic beauty but also as the work of anonymous guild craftsmen.<sup>5</sup>

As the post-war mass-housing 'drive' was, at first, one of the proudest achievements of the twentieth-century era of mass national cohesion and disciplined material betterment, one could expect each country almost by definition to have developed its own individual variant on the theme. Each society, for example, had its own particular balance of the power and initiative of the state with the continuing role of private interests – with the USA or Australia being at one extreme, the 'socialist bloc' at the other, and most Western European countries somewhere in the middle. Here, I intend to divide my treatment, for convenience, between, on the one hand, the processes of organizing, financing, producing and inhabiting mass housing, and, on the other, the specific intellectual discourses and forms of its architecture.

Twentieth-century mass housing, as it is popularly portrayed – serried ranks of tall blocks, endless Garden-Suburb estates or completely new towns, built for low-income groups under the aegis or control of the state – is largely confined to relatively limited areas of the world: Northern and Western Europe; the USSR and its immediate satellites; the city states of Hong Kong and Singapore (Figure 9.1); and a few parts of northern and eastern America, although even in these areas, it is still possible to find countries with very little mass social housing – for example Norway or the Republic of Ireland.<sup>6</sup>

And only really in Northern and Western Europe does the *chronological* situation of the 'housing drive' fit our preconceived picture, heavily structured by the two world wars: namely, an initial inter-war period of the rise of state intervention in the housing market and experimentation in different architectural and planning forms

9.1  
'British-style' estate  
name-board of  
typical Hong  
Kong Housing  
Authority multi-  
storey estate,  
constructed  
1971.  
Photographed in  
1983.



of mass housing, followed by a post-war period of mass implementation, largely exhausted or rejected by the late 1960s/1970s.<sup>7</sup>

But within that restricted Northern and Western European 'mass-housing zone', there was very much in common. Almost all countries in it had accepted by around 1910, under the influence partly of rising expectations, that the private housing market had become incapable of providing enough low-rental houses, and then, under the impetus of the wars and international tensions of the time, had, in response, put together somewhat warlike national housing campaigns involving sweeping state intervention, first in the workings of the private market, and then in some cases carrying on to erect a new alternative state system of housing provision.<sup>8</sup> Depending largely on the level of international crisis, those national campaigns fluctuated between wider 'general needs' campaigns aimed at remedying wartime shortage or providing 'homes for all', and, on the other hand, specialized campaigns aimed for instance at the 'war against the slums', or to build strategic new industries in new towns etc. While the new social patrons varied from state agencies to philanthropic or co-operative organizations, or even regulated private firms, the system of production itself was almost exclusively through the private building industry, changed from speculative development to contracting, and increasingly emphasizing large national organizations rather than scattered local ones; in some countries there was also a big private speculative sector alongside this, in others not.<sup>9</sup> Because of its close association with the impassioned climate of wartime, mass housing in Europe also became bound up with a violent cycle of advocacy and feverish production followed by rejection – these fluctuations being bound up with a rich discourse of socio-political controversy. At the end, from the 1960s, the trend was from centralization to more participatory processes, and from 'social planning' to more 'market' contexts.

One of the most universal aspects of these drives – so we take for granted today – was the use of modernist patterns of architecture. Spatially this emphasized strikingly new forms and layouts, intellectually supported with a complex yet coherent ideology of scientific humanism, which combined a rationalistic reliance on method and standardization with a utopian questing for community and social salvation.<sup>10</sup> One could say that housing was the building type which became seen as *the* key arena for actually realizing on a large scale the Modern Movement values of mass provision in accordance with rationalist standards. But this ascendancy of the Modern Movement only really applied in the period from 1945, when inter-war aspirations were followed by huge efforts to implement modern mass-housing production on a general basis. Previously, traditionalist classical or *Heimat* styles had been generally dominant. In any case, the Modern Movement was actually a very diverse movement, much of whose universal appeal lay in its inherent creative tensions – not only between science and humanism, or between different or successive 'styles' or layout types of housing, but also between the brand new and the 'rooted', the particular and the international, the politically committed and the artistic-poetic, or the mass-produced and the 'individual genius' – whether architectural style or movement.

Yet from an outside perspective all these still had much in common,

envisaging the designer (in the words of eminent English municipal architect, David Percival) as ‘a social-reforming artist-scientist’. And there was still a lot in common in the physical environment of the new housing, above all, through the stress on a striking, separate newness, sharply distinguished from the old environments behind. The most prolific types of modernist mass housing were cleanly geometrical blocks in flowing space and greenery, although other phases and approaches, especially in the 1960s, emphasized lower and denser patterns. Almost all previous housing, even in Garden Suburbs, had been built along streets, with a front and a back – although Britain differed from the Continent here by generally allowing for plentiful air and space even in urban settings. The Modern Movement did away with overt architectural hierarchies, or degrees of stateliness and monumentality; there was no front or back, no grander or humbler houses. Especially in the most passionately egalitarian, Taylorist years of the 1940s, everything was supposedly of equal status, with science or utopian theory determining access of light or air for all, an approach exemplified in the large-scale building of the so-called *Zeilenbau* pattern, a rather horizontal layout of slab blocks arranged in parallel to maximize sunlight orientation, without any regard for existing streets or context, and all evenly spaced out and the same, like the lines on a page (Figure 9.2).<sup>11</sup>

The 1950s and 1960s saw a greater stress on more variegated combinations, including high tower blocks to symbolize the radical break from the old horizontal street city, and to provide a new type of landmark punctuation. And then, in the later 1960s and 1970s, generally there was a reaction against these very high and violently different patterns towards more ‘traditional’ scales and patterns, including a degree of rejection even of newness itself to embrace preservation of the previously reviled old nineteenth-century capitalist-built housing environments. Yet, as we will see shortly, it was just as universally modernist to insist on constant

**9.2**  
Tabula-rasa  
redevelopment:  
1964 view of  
the Ellor Street  
Redevelopment  
Area, Salford,  
showing three  
slab blocks  
designed by the  
City Engineer  
rising in a sea of  
clearance.





diversity, change and debate, and even (from around the mid-1930s onwards within the International Modern Movement) on the search for self-consciously local or vernacular-influenced solutions.<sup>12</sup>

## National patterns in UK state housing

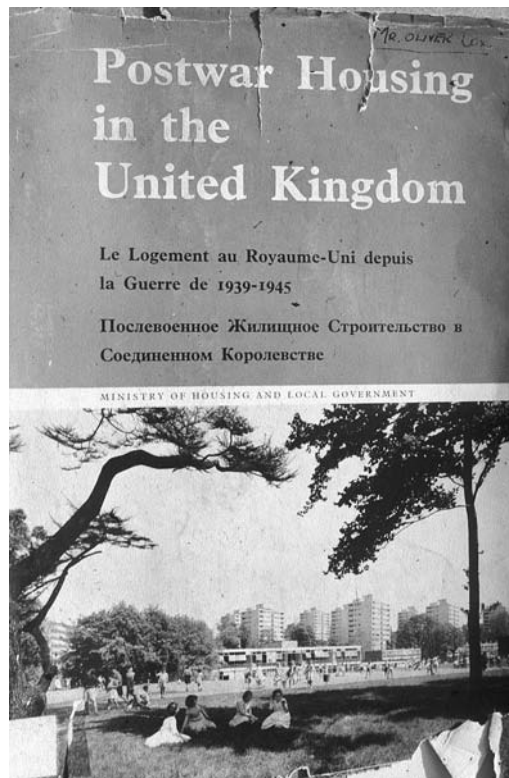
Let us now narrow our focus of investigation to successively more particular or localized conceptions or patterns of mass housing – beginning again with the processes of organization, and with the aspects that most distinguished the UK from the generality of mass housing in other Western countries. Here, it should be immediately mentioned that the UK had not one but two basic systems of mass housing, one in Britain (with national variants in England, Scotland and Wales) and the other in the devolved statelet of Northern Ireland. Outside the UK, and therefore outside the scope of this chapter, are the somewhat different systems of social housing in the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man, although the States of Jersey, especially, maintained a strong mass-housing programme including many high flats.<sup>13</sup>

In Britain, the period after 1918 saw the construction of a highly distinctive system of public intervention in housing, focused overwhelmingly on municipal local authorities, traditionally very strong in the big industrial cities of England and Scotland. Especially following the swingeing recommendations of the 1917 Ballantyne Report on Scottish working-class housing, in the wake of the wartime Clydeside rent strikes, the councils began not only to regulate and subsidize low-rent houses, as in many countries, but actually to build and manage them.<sup>14</sup> As a result, housing became closely mixed up with local politics and local pride, and parties competed to build up strong and self-perpetuating housing drives; utopian political rhetoric drove many city councils by the 1940s to see it as their duty to build ‘for all’. In the big cities, the ‘numbers game’ became dominant, with pressure for output of new homes often taking precedence over all else. This ‘council housing’, in its highly unified ‘estates’ (in England or Wales) or ‘schemes’ (in Scotland), strongly contrasted with the rather fragmented or arms-length social-housing systems of countries like West Germany or France, and even more with the reliance on tax breaks for private builders in Belgium or parts of Southern Europe – or the residuum role assigned to public housing in the United States.<sup>15</sup> In some parts of Britain, private speculative building remained prominent, but elsewhere council housing became overwhelmingly dominant in new building: for example, in Scotland, throughout the 1950s and 1960s around three-quarters of all new housing was in council schemes – as much as 96 per cent in Glasgow.<sup>16</sup> But as a counter to the sometimes parochial force of this system, a weaker counter-programme of central-government directed housing, closely bound up with the anti-local movement of regional planning, was also begun from the 1930s and 1940s, in the New Town programme and, from 1937, the work of the Scottish Special Housing Association (SSHA).

In Northern Ireland, the fundamental political-cultural tensions over national sovereignty within the post-1920 Stormont statelet led to a radically different version of this balance between local and central after the Second World War. Especially in the 1960s, the ruling Unionists were increasingly split between conservatives, who resisted large-scale redistributive welfare measures, such as

regional planning or even council housing, as a threat to the political status quo, and reformists, determined to shake things up in the interests of 'parity' with the welfare state in Britain. Thus council housing never really got off the ground in the large urban areas, especially in Belfast, where the Corporation held to a more restricted nineteenth-century view of the scope of municipal activity, and in Londonderry, where the demands of gerrymandering (electoral boundary manipulation) channelled council housebuilding into a few highly restricted areas. Instead, the post-1945 pursuit of 'parity' through mass social-housing estates was mainly overseen directly by Stormont civil servants, through a national housebuilding agency, the Northern Ireland Housing Trust (NIHT), modelled on the SSHA but relatively far more powerful in its zone of operation. The situation was the reverse of that in Britain, with the Trust taking the main initiative – rather like the mighty national housing authorities in Hong Kong and Singapore thirty years later – and the local authorities merely reacting to it. Eventually, with the sharp growth of civil unrest after 1969, the government took a logical further step and removed social housing from the local authorities altogether, allocating it to a single national body, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive – where it remains to this day.<sup>17</sup>

Architecturally, mass housing in the UK shared a number of general characteristics (Figure 9.3). There was a strong intellectual tradition, concentrated in London, with polarization against 'the rest'. The London pattern of intense



9.3  
Front cover of  
1961 government  
promotional  
book on UK  
public housing,  
featuring the  
London County  
Council's famous  
Roehampton  
development.

intellectualization was diffused to some extent through a minority of innovative public authorities, city councils, and also more widely by some private firms staffed by bright ex-public-sector designers – for example, the dynasty founded by ex-LCC architectural chief Robert Matthew and Hertfordshire Schools architect Stirrat Johnson-Marshall in 1953–6 – as well as by the powerful and variegated architectural press. This intellectual-cum-journalistic ferment was structured by the special, polarized traditions of English architectural debate that had held ever since A. W. N. Pugin's *Contrasts* in the 1830s. Architecture was seen as a field of violently clashing utopias fighting to displace each other. Mass housing, with its built-in socio-political conflicts, was an ideal field for this kind of approach, and in the UK, especially of course in England and London, far from stale homogeneity, different passionate fads of building type, density, layout, succeeded each other with bewildering speed in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, with terms such as 'human', 'functional', 'community' redefined and bandied about repeatedly – so that even the *Architectural Review* could complain in 1948, 'Thus we get Humane Objective Organic Spontaneity, and the mist begins to clear', while in 1961 Reyner Banham talked of 'the so-called New Humanism of the early 50s and the endless guff we used to hear in those days of human scale etc. [That] movement . . . has died already'.<sup>18</sup> Each of these phases, or fashions, was generally invented (or adapted for Britain) by the London elite and then disseminated and mass-built in the 'provinces' (with the initiative shifting from the architectural elite to non-architectural, local groups in true 'vernacular' fashion) until its mass building became the dystopia for the next phase. Thus this elite discourse actually not only disregarded but actively slighted the implications of the modernist demand for standardized mass building.

At first, though, during the 1940s and 1950s, there certainly was much disciplined national consensus, among the architects and engineering designers of the first blocks of modernist construction, together with the municipal agents who commissioned them – all driven by an immensely strong, somewhat utopian mission, best summed up by the umbrella term which the British were proud to have invented: the 'Welfare State'.<sup>19</sup> It was part of the pride of the Welfare State system of architecture that the cream of the modernist elite devoted themselves not to private housing but to public housing. But even at this time of greatest unity, the British, especially English, tradition of rapidity of debate and sharpness of polarization between different factions soon re-emerged – contrary to later stereotypes of 'homogeneity'. No sooner was the modernist pattern of open space and high blocks established, than, from around 1950, a new storm of division and debate arose about English high-rise public housing. Rejecting many of the rationalist tenets of CIAM (Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne) planning, avant-garde groups, led by Alison and Peter Smithson and the 'New Brutalists', rejected tower blocks as crude and alienating, and advocated lower, more dense, 'community intensive' interconnections – a campaign with far-reaching effects.<sup>20</sup>

As to the built-form, architectural results of this ferment, in its outlines, the successive main phases were as follows. In the late 1930s and 1940s most mass-built social housing in Britain tended to be in conservative styles: simple vernacular cottages in suburban Garden Suburbs; classical art-deco tenement-type flats

in cities. The Modern Movement alternative was a minority thing, and very much confined to a strict Functionalist demand for pure white flat-roofed blocks, dictated by the demand for scientific standards and 'mod. cons', laid out in the strict *Zeilenbau* pattern in open space and with all different land-uses strictly segregated. The large 'general needs' suburban estates and early New Towns of the late 1940s continued the conservative, low-density Garden Suburb pattern, but with slightly more modern cottage or flat types. In the early 1950s, while the demand for newness and space continued, influential LCC housing pointed to two new ways of expressing this: the 'mixed development' of cottages, low flats and slender, high, point blocks, visually more picturesque and socially supposedly encouraging community; and a more rhetorically monumental approach, emphasizing massive concrete-slab blocks, influenced by the post-war work of Le Corbusier.<sup>21</sup> In both cases, there was a growing emphasis on the separation of vehicles and pedestrian access-ways, something that accentuated the self-containment of the new, designed environments.

Reflecting the counter-campaign led by the Smithsons in the late 1950s and 1960s against any kind of clean, open-space approach, or any kind of segregatory zoning, a mighty new architectural trend arose: to link buildings together in agglomerations, in more closely 'clustered', joined-up patterns, rather than to separate them out in free space. The aspiration was to reflect even the muddle of the previously hated old urban slum patterns, in an attempt to create a more 'real' community – although pedestrian-vehicle separation, and a general feeling of separate 'newness' in housing projects, were still sacrosanct. The later 1950s saw the construction of the enormous complex of Park Hill in Sheffield (Figure 9.4), designed by Sheffield Corporation's own architects. This one might define as a series of slabs, but they were not placed next to each other. They were more like a chain, creating one large conglomerate, completely linking up all blocks by a 'deck-access' system.<sup>22</sup> There was a new desire for density for itself; there could be no 'urban feeling' without



9.4  
Street deck  
in Sheffield  
Corporation's  
pioneering  
Park Hill Part 1,  
planned from  
1953, completed  
1959.

high density. From the late 1950s until the late 1960s London authorities, in particular, built a great number of these often immensely complex estates of medium- to high-rise high-density blocks. At the time these appeared as wonders of architectural complexity, with their warrens of lanes, internal courts and split levels: epitomized in some large inner London developments like North Peckham or Lillington Gardens (Figure 9.5); or in the New Towns, as at Bishopfield in Harlow; an entire cluster town was built at Cumbernauld in Central Scotland from the late 1950s onwards.

But at the same time, in the early/mid-1960s, there was also a relatively brief phase of intense enthusiasm by some authorities and architects for a heightened systems or industrial building approach, with a proliferation of factory-built techniques emphasizing repetition and mass production. This fashion for 'industrialized building' was partly a reflection of real building shortages during the national building boom of the early 1960s, and consequent government encouragement of prefabrication and the formation of local-authority 'consortia' to create great packages of demand that would allow contractors such as Camus or Concrete Ltd to build pre-casting factories. Although much government advice at the time stressed the desirability of targeting systems at low-rise housing, and inventing 'open systems' suitable for complex, architect-led designs, in practice, 1960s system building mainly took the form of contractors' proprietary 'closed systems' for high flats.<sup>23</sup>

Eventually, by the 1970s, all these Modern Movement patterns of trying to build community through new special environments of social housing – low or high, clustered or spaced out – fell totally from fashion, and instead community began to be seen especially as something most inherent in those same old previously reviled nineteenth-century English terraces or Scottish tenements. In these chastened years, in places like Milton Keynes, people argued new housing should be uncomplicated and should aspire to do no more than to reflect these supposedly traditional values.<sup>24</sup>



9.5  
Phase 1 of  
Darbourne and  
Darke's Lillington  
Gardens  
redevelopment,  
from 1961 (for  
Westminster  
City Council):  
London's first  
set-piece of  
dense, brick-  
vernacular  
planning; view of  
inner courtyard.  
Photographed in  
1979.

## The local mosaic

In these successive architectural or built-form trends of state mass housing, we constantly witness the strongest contrasts of approach, between highly scenographic and anti-style methods, between soft vernacular and hard industrial, between dense and spacious, and so forth. These trends were not completely rootless, but were also influenced by a number of more general recurring tendencies, concentrated in England, Wales and Northern Ireland as opposed to Scotland: namely, a strong predilection for picturesque and ruralizing rather than urban and monumental solutions, which were often portrayed as alien or foreign.<sup>25</sup> In Northern Ireland, the hatred of flats and idealizing of a mythical deep rural essence was at its strongest, whereas in Scotland, the classical urban tradition of flat living remained a potent force. To be sure, the abstruse, rapid-fire debates about housing, by the Smithsons and other London intellectuals, could hardly be described as ‘vernacular’ in any way – the very opposite, in fact. But the tradition of municipal autonomy in Britain was intertwined with this highly hierarchical intellectual-architectural story in a somewhat antagonistic way. This, in other words, is where we begin to pass from national to local values in modern housing, finding in the process that the two did not easily fit with each other. The enormous national output of public housing was not the work of just a few gurus or professionals, but of a vast range of political, administrative and industrial agents, in municipal authorities across the country – a great drive amounting not exactly to ‘architecture without architects’ but, often, at any rate, to ‘building’ in which architects and elite designers played a marginal or even oppositional role.<sup>26</sup> What, then, actually happened ‘on the ground’: what actually were the particular divergences and groupings in the method and the architecture of modernist housing across Britain – and did they, together, amount to a new kind of ‘modernist vernacular’?

In the remainder of the chapter, I intend to try to piece together some key parts of this complex ‘modern-vernacular’ mosaic. In doing this, as already hinted above, it would be no use simply saying: this region or area did X, and the next one did Y, as one arguably could for the nineteenth century; things had become too intermingled for that. What I want to do is to sketch out roughly three different approaches to post-war public mass housing, approaches that all correspond to ranges of geographical places, but not to discrete regions: each approach is found, in some form or another, across the whole UK, although concentrations vary. The constituent units of each approach, or ethos, are individual municipal or public house-building authorities – that may not be the same thing, of course.

To help simplify the many constraints that helped shape the distinctive recipes in particular places, I intend to address the subject especially in terms of two important polarizations. First, in the governing ethos of housing, there was the divide between the most architecturally and intellectually elitist approaches, on the one hand, and the most utilitarian, commercially or politically driven projects on the other. Second, in the built form, came that between the most dense, large and urban, and the most spread-out or reticent. To some extent, these polarizations played against each other throughout the post-war years, but the relative power of the two extremes of output and design approaches fluctuated wildly over time. The output grouping’s time of ascendancy generally followed, rather than paralleled, that

of the architectural intellectuals, so that the story of mass housing in Britain was one not of continuity but of sharp disjunction: from the 1950s as the 'national' architect-dominated phase to the 1960s as the decade dominated by municipal political and industrial forces.

### **'Architecture-first' housing: the LCC and its imitators**

The first grouping I would like to identify is what, at the risk of exaggeration, I shall refer to as the 'art for art's sake' grouping: urban authorities insulated from the most driving output pressures; authorities which gave weight to the elite ideas and concerns of architects, planners and other professionals who were opposed to the blanket pursuit of the numbers game, and to the subsuming of the creative-cum-professional role of architects within commercial builders' package deals. The most influential of these elite public authorities tended to be those that were not tied directly to municipal politics, either because they had a regional supra-role or because they were controlled by central government through direct administrative mechanisms. The key legitimizing example of this approach was the LCC, the 'upper tier' authority in the county of London's two-tier system up to 1965, the lower tier being the weaker metropolitan boroughs. After the creation of the new, larger London metropolitan area in 1965, the balance of power shifted towards the new lower-tier authorities, the London boroughs. The new upper-tier authority, the Greater London Council (GLC), was far weaker and was, of course, eventually abolished by Margaret Thatcher in 1986. The LCC's status came not just from its power but also from its policies, which were influenced by the somewhat enlightened, intellectual ethos of many of its councillors within its Fabian regime. As a regional authority, it fiercely promoted the 1940s Abercrombie-Reith agenda of New Towns and population over-spill; it was both municipal and anti-municipal in ethos. And as the builder of most of London's council houses, it set a forceful example in 1950 when it transferred responsibility for new housing design from the production-oriented Department of the Valuer to the Architect, Robert Matthew.<sup>27</sup>

The LCC was in the very forefront of the most advanced design tendencies up to the early 1950s, when Matthew's department spawned a highly creative internal polarization – the 'Soft' versus 'Hard' split, between Communists dedicated to picturesque 'people's detailing' and a faction of heroic Corbusian aesthetes. Matthew was especially adept at appeasing political demands for higher output, while fostering design diversity. But after his departure in 1953, and that of his successor Leslie Martin three years later, the LCC's reputation in housing design stagnated, as it and the later GLC carried on building mixed developments, mixed in with some medium-rise/low-rise high-density developments (Figure 9.6). The LCC regulated the housing programmes of the metropolitan boroughs, and was able, through planning restrictions, to stop any from trying to embark on their own 'numbers game': for example, in 1956, it suppressed some proposals by Paddington Metropolitan Borough Council for extreme-high-density tower developments. A few metropolitan boroughs in inner areas developed their own LCC-style culture of enlightened social provision, building on the pre-war tradition established by Finsbury, which had already commissioned Tecton to design *Zeilenbau*-type slab estates in

## 9.6

Estate name-board of the LCC (later GLC) Upper Tulse Hill (St Martin's) estate, a mixed development built in the late 1950s.

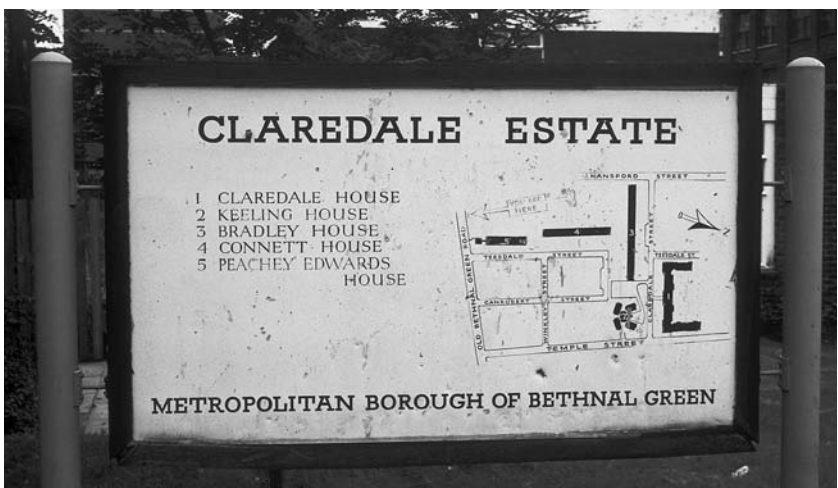


the 1930s and 1940s (Figure 9.7). Other similar cases included Westminster (with Powell and Moya's pioneering Pimlico development, from 1946), Chelsea (with Eric Lyons's World's End project of twenty-storey linked towers, commenced 1969) and the City of London Corporation, in its avant-garde high-rental Barbican development, a cluster courtyard layout including forty-five-storey towers, first planned in 1959 and built from 1963. Some of the post-1965 London boroughs carried on the same tradition of relatively non-output-oriented, architect-dominated programmes, including Lambeth, whose borough architect, Ted Hollamby, came from the LCC and encouraged a fairly individualistic approach, or Camden, which made a speciality of low-rise high density in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>28</sup>

But, from the mid-1950s, the 'design-oriented' torch was equally carried on by a minority of provincial authorities, some of which participated in mainstream

## 9.7

1988 photograph of a rare surviving estate name-board from a pre-1965 metropolitan borough: Bethnal Green's Claredale Street estate, including Denys Lasdun's cluster block of 1956-8.





national trends. Others followed their own path – above all Sheffield, where a powerful City Architect, Lewis Womersley, and a succession of supportive, Maecenas-like Housing Committee chairmen, notably Harold Lambert, helped establish the deck-access movement nationally, in a consistent series of developments following Park Hill. Coventry was always seen as a special case, because of the prestige of its post-bombing reconstruction, which gave it an LCC-like architect/planner-dominated character. By the late 1950s, its City Architect was Arthur Ling, Matthew's former chief planner at the LCC and a dedicated Soviet-style Communist. He ploughed a more idiosyncratic path, shaping Coventry in a distinctly Moscow-like way, with isolated landmark towers.<sup>29</sup>

Outside the LCC, the 'design' cause was most consistently championed by the post-1946 New Towns, governed as they were by quasi-colonial administrative Development Corporations – like the ExCo of a British colony – with chief architect/planners enjoying almost total autonomy from local political output pressures. Unlike the more fevered succession of dense urban fashions in the cities, housing architecture in the New Towns went through a more simplified evolution, with only two basic phases. The first was a traditional Garden City formula of low-rise houses and flats in greenery, modified by a limited degree of pedestrian-vehicle segregation and with up-to-date-modern dwellings styled usually in a slightly more conservative pitched-roof form. The housing was grouped in so-called neighbourhood units – semi-autonomous areas separated by greenery, and with local neighbourhood centres. At its most advanced, as in Harlow, planned by Frederick Gibberd, these resembled LCC mixed developments, with their landmarks of point blocks.<sup>30</sup> The second phase of New Town housing was the more nervously clustered formula of low-rise medium-density terraces and flats, sometimes still with tower punctuations, and combined a little incongruously with the new demand for totally grade-segregated, highly engineered road networks. This approach was pioneered and realized in its most extreme form by Cumbernauld, designed from the late 1950s and built mostly in the 1960s, but all the following New Towns echoed it to some extent. The Scottish Special Housing Association, a national housebuilding organization closely linked to regional planning, and oriented especially towards development in economic growth areas, behaved rather like an extended New Town Development Corporation, and – although it did also build some multi-storey developments in cities – followed the same general architectural course of 1940s/1950s Garden Cities, with more dense low- and medium-rise patterns in the 1960s, all masterminded by the powerful chief technical officer (meaning, chief architect), Harold Buteux.<sup>31</sup>

In contrast, the Northern Ireland Housing Trust, although similar in organizational appearance, was always run rather more parsimoniously by its Presbyterian bosses, who tended to look down on the SSHA as a hopeless subsidy junkie of Scottish socialism: one reformist Stormont administrator joked that, at the NIHT, 'you could imagine everyone having to bring in their own lump of coal in the morning'. Until curbed by the imposition of a Belfast Green Belt in the early 1960s, the Trust tended to build Garden Cities pure and simple, made up of cheap terraced cottage patterns, but from around 1960 it began, reluctantly, to build limited numbers of high-rise tower blocks, again of a rather conservative kind (Figure 9.8).<sup>32</sup>

## 9.8

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive's (previously Northern Ireland Housing Trust) Rathcoole estate, north of Belfast, showing on the right a typical type 'M' low-rise block of 1955, and in the background the four fifteen-storey Sectra blocks added to the estate in 1965. Photographed in 1981.



### Balancing design and production

The second pattern of mass housing I would like to focus on here is that produced by large authorities of an intermediate character: generally large cities whose council electorates ensured that large-scale housing output was protected, but whose designers, usually protected by a powerful City Architect or by remnants of the turn-of-the-century City-Beautiful municipal ethos of urban stateliness and order, were able to protect a degree of architectural 'respectability', not by anything avant-garde but by competently reproducing by now slightly out-of-date patterns previously introduced elsewhere by more architecturally thrusting authorities. The prime example of this middle-of-the-road approach was Birmingham Corporation, whose new young City Architect from 1952, Alwyn Sheppard Fidler, a former Rome Scholar, introduced a range of fairly up-to-date LCC mixed-development-type patterns, but whose over-careful approach eventually resulted in his being forced out of his post by political pressure from powerful councillors – especially Labour group leader Harry Watton – looking for higher output. He was replaced by a less imaginative but much more efficient City Architect, Alan Maudsley, who simply used Sheppard Fidler's most recent types and layouts in endless permutations of mixed developments of point blocks and terraced houses, most notably at the huge out-county development of Chelmsley Wood. Most of the programme was assigned to local West Midlands contractor Bryant, and a prominent corruption case and jail for Maudsley was the outcome. There was absolutely nothing innovative about these massive developments – they did not even include any deck blocks, so in strictly architectural/aesthetic terms they belonged back in the mid-1950s – yet the estates themselves, despite Lynsey Hanley's recent polemical book against Chelmsley Wood, were actually very competent and pleasant developments.<sup>33</sup>

A similar attractive but non-innovative competence was evident in other cities – for example, in Newcastle, where T. Dan Smith's replanning and modernization programme of the 1960s included, also not without contractual controversy, a succession of, again, well-planned and well-maintained multi-storey developments

based on somewhat old-fashioned point-block patterns; or, taking a totally different form, in the north east of Scotland, in Aberdeen, where the local tradition of upright civic order and granite-clad stateliness gave rise to a highly distinctive housing drive, again using tower-block and low-rise patterns that basically went back to the early 1950s LCC, but expressed them in a very specific local way, with insistent granite cladding, construction by local firms – no outside system building – and a modified City-Beautiful urban-design context, that included grand boulevards and vast swathes of municipal flower-bedding (Figure 9.9).

One generation of architecture further on, was the housing drive of one of the new London boroughs, Southwark, whose borough architect, Frank Hayes, reacting sharply against isolated towers in open space, was able to channel the mounting pressure for output from councillors into a huge programme of lower-height, but equally dense projects – including ‘medium-rise’ industrialized-building slab-deck blocks like the Aylesbury Development, and ‘traditional’, lower-height, brick-built clustered courtyard developments like North Peckham.

The juggling act between output and architecture was a perilous one, and Sheppard Fidler in Birmingham was not the only casualty. Another powerful borough architect in the London area, Thomas North of West Ham (Newham from 1965), tripped up during the 1960s systems boom when he tried to impose what he saw as the most architecturally variegated system, Larsen Nielsen. Sloppy building and, ultimately, the Ronan Point collapse disaster was the result.<sup>34</sup>



**9.9**  
Aberdeen  
Corporation's  
Gallowgate  
redevelopment  
(from 1965).  
Part of the city's  
high-quality and  
meticulously  
maintained  
programme  
of modernist  
housing in  
'granite grey'  
colouring.

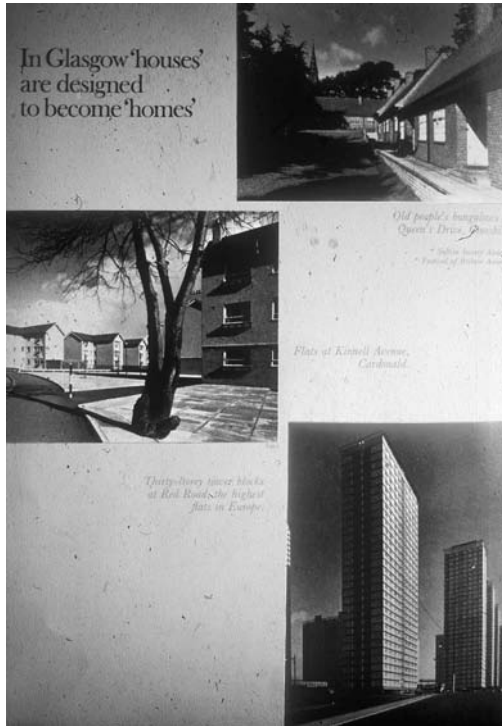
Similarly, slightly later attempts in the late 1960s to introduce more architecturally up-to-date medium-rise deck-access patterns to the relatively conservative programmes of some northern English authorities (by their own design-research organizations, the Yorkshire Development Group [YDG] and the Manchester Development Group) backfired when the first projects ran into severe maintenance and vandalism problems; the first YDG development in Leeds was appropriately called Leek Street!<sup>35</sup> Leeds abandoned its YDG programme altogether after that, and made a highly precocious conversion to the cause of area improvement of terraced houses, an illustration of the way in which municipal state paramountcy in housing could allow drastic policy change overnight at a city-wide level, including here a shift almost overnight from rearguard to vanguard.

### The output zealots

The third and final category of large-scale public housing authorities comprised a variety of large urban councils, who had only a very limited interest in design, and tended to be dominated by powerful housing committees or leaders, who rejected all architects and designers as effete buffoons; their own architects tended to be rather beleaguered by engineer-organizer officials, like the situation in the LCC before Matthew recovered housing from the Valuer. Package-deal contracts with large builders were increasingly the rule in the 1960s, though many authorities also brought local employment into the political equation of municipal housing, by setting up a direct labour organization (DLO) to build or maintain their houses.<sup>36</sup>

This category of mass housing was, of course, the closest to the stereotype of the 'vernacular', in its marginalization of the architectural elites, yet it would be a mistake to regard it as more intrinsically 'vernacular' than the other categories – not least because many of its programmes were on a vast scale, and were run by extensive municipal bureaucracies. The prime exemplar of the output-zealot approach was undoubtedly Glasgow Corporation, which ever since the 1940s had tried to fight off a 'threat' of planner-led overspill by utilitarian mass-building of old-fashioned patterns of dense flats: four-storey tenements in the early/mid-1950s, or tower blocks on their own in the 1960s (Figure 9.10). The architects and planners in Glasgow Corporation – despite having devised vast proposals for nearly thirty 'comprehensive developments' ringing the inner areas of the city – were very much an endangered species. The finding and completely ad hoc exploitation of sites with massive tower and slab blocks was controlled by the 'crusading' Housing Committee Convener, David Gibson, and his engineer assistant, Lewis Cross.<sup>37</sup> Similar patterns prevailed in some other Scottish cities and towns, especially Dundee, whose forceful councillors and local building industry fuelled a programme of mainly peripheral greenfield developments. These were old-fashioned in style and layout, of course: what was unique was their sheer scale, which would have been appropriate in London, but was simply vast for a city of less than 200,000 people. Key Dundee projects included the massive development of eighteen-storey *Zeilenbau* blocks at Ardler, of 1964, and the 5,000-dwelling city extension of slab blocks and hexagonal-courtyard deck blocks at Whitfield in 1967–72.<sup>38</sup>

That kind of unfettered output orientation, and almost 'anti-design' ethos,



9.10  
Page from early 1970s promotional brochure by Glasgow Corporation's City Architect's department, showing a cross-section of post-war city housing: early 1950s old people's cottages, early 1960s low-rise flats, and the 1962–9 Red Road multi-storey development – eight blocks of up to thirty-one storeys, containing 1,350 dwellings, built by direct labour.

was less common in England, although there were some examples: Shoreditch was a pre-1965 London metropolitan borough where high rate value allowed it to sustain a (pro rata) massive programme of old-fashioned, low brick tower blocks and slabs; or the borough of Enfield (Edmonton before 1965), where a rather go-ahead DLO, known as 'EDLO', developed its own system to build a succession of domineering towers studded with overwhelming geometrical patterning in the mid-1960s.<sup>39</sup>

The relative power of groups two and three, then, sharply increased during the 1960s. Indeed, by the mid-1960s, the old split between art and business which had dominated the story of British architecture and building in the nineteenth century now once again seemed as wide as ever, despite the shift from capitalist to state-socialist initiative.

## Conclusion

Finally, how credible is the concept of a post-war 'housing vernacular'? To be sure, this chapter has indeed traced a complex pattern of local, regional and national diversity, largely unstructured in its organization. On the other hand, that diversity is so broad, and embraces so many 'embedded' elements of highly rational or calculated character, that to apply the term 'vernacular' to it might seem to stretch the definition to the point of a *reductio ad absurdum*. Perhaps, also, despite all the recent demolitions, modernist mass housing is still just a bit too 'new' and ubiquitous to be accepted as a true 'vernacular'. Here we begin to stray into another, later narrative of

mass housing, not covered in this chapter – that of the post-completion processes of reception. This has been a phase with equally diverse and conflicting standpoints, some of violent rejection, others of enduring tolerance and finally, more recently, of revival and even fashionability. It has become increasingly a story dominated not by the Welfare State patterns of diversity of administrative-led blocs and institutions – the agents reviewed in this chapter – but the more chaotically individualistic strivings of agents in today's market economy. In that context of competition and fragmentation, some tower blocks are plucked out for celebrity and investment (hardly ever the same ones, however, as were fashionable among the old architectural elite, other than the few that have been listed as heritage) while others are left to accelerated decay, as an everyday, disregarded residue. If much more mass housing disappears in the near future, and the rarity-value of survivors correspondingly increases, can we expect to witness a more general heritage re-appropriation of mass housing as a credible new phase of 'vernacular'? The next quarter century or so may well reveal the answer to that question.

## Notes

- 1 See, for example, Tom Begg, *Housing Policy in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1996). On earlier twentieth-century expressions of state power in city planning schemes see: Wolfgang Sonne, *Representing the State* (Munich, 2003).
- 2 See, for example, eds Elain Harwood and Alan Powers, *Housing the Twentieth-Century Nation*, *Twentieth Century Architecture* 9 (London, 2008).
- 3 Paul Oliver, *Dwellings: The Vernacular House Worldwide* (London, 2003); Marcel Vellinga and Paul Oliver, *Atlas of Vernacular Architecture of the World* (London, 2007).
- 4 Stefan Muthesius, *The English Terraced House* (London, 1982).
- 5 Andrew Saint, *The Image of the Architect* (London, 1983); E. Cumming and W. Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement* (London, 1991), pp. 11–15.
- 6 USSR: Anatole Kopp, *Housing for the Masses* (Washington, DC, 1981); F. Urban, 'Prefab Russia', *Docomomo International Journal*, 39, 2008, pp. 18–22; H. Morton, 'Housing in the Soviet Union', *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science*, 35/3, 1984. America: eds H. Ballon and K. H. T. Jackson, *Robert Moses and the Modern City* (New York, 2007), pp. 306–7; eds M. McClelland and G. Stewart, *Concrete Toronto* (Toronto, 2007), pp. 212–15. Hong Kong and Singapore: M. Castells, L. Goh and R. Kwok, *The Shek Kip Mei Syndrome: Economic Development and Public Housing in Hong Kong and Singapore* (London, 1990).
- 7 General international overview of post-war mass social-housing legacy: *Docomomo International Journal*, 39, September 2008 (themed issue: 'Post-War Mass Housing'); electronic proceedings of 2007 DOCOMOMO Conference on mass housing, 'Trash or Treasure': [[www.archi.fr/DOCOMOMO/docomomo\\_electronic\\_newsletter7.htm](http://www.archi.fr/DOCOMOMO/docomomo_electronic_newsletter7.htm) (accessed June 2009)].
- 8 Elizabeth Denby, *Europe Re-Housed* (London, 1938); Anne Power, *Hovels to High-Rise: State Housing in Europe since 1850* (London, 1993); Anne Power, *Estates on the Edge: The Social Consequences of Mass Housing in Northern Europe* (London, 1997); eds R. Rowlands, S. Musterd and R. van Kempen, *Mass Housing in Europe* (Basingstoke, 2007); eds F. Dufaux and A. Fourcaut, *Le Monde des Grands Ensembles* (Paris, 2004); R. H. Guerrand, *Une Europe en Construction* (Paris, 1992); eds S. Lowe and D. Hughes, *A New Century of Social Housing* (London, 1991); ed. C. G. Pooley, *Housing Strategies in Europe 1880–1930* (London, 1992).
- 9 M. Bowley, *The British Building Industry* (London, 1966); C. G. Powell, *An Economic History of the British Building Industry* (London, 1980).
- 10 ed. I. B. Whyte, *Man-Made Future* (London, 2006).

## M. Glendinning

- 11 Interview with David Percival, 1983; Nicholas Bullock, *Building the Post-War World* (London, 2002); J. Gold, *The Experience of Modernism: Modern Architects and the Future City, 1928–1953* (London, 1997); J. Gold, *The Practice of Modernism: Modern Architects and Urban Transformation, 1954–1972* (London, 2007).
- 12 *Architectural Review*, Nov. 1967; E. Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928–1960* (Cambridge, Mass., 2003), pp. 201ff.
- 13 Much of what follows is derived from Miles Glendinning and Stefan Muthesius, *Tower Block* (London, 1994). For this particular point see p. 328. The entire text of this book is available online, free of charge, at [www.towerblock.org](http://www.towerblock.org).
- 14 Miles Glendinning, 'The Ballantyne Report', in *The Architecture of Scottish Cities*, ed. Deborah Mays (East Linton, 1997).
- 15 M. Bowley, *Housing and the State* (London, 1945); ed. Martin Daunt, *Councillors and Tenants* (London, 1984); eds Miles Glendinning and Diane Watters, *Home Builders* (Edinburgh, 1999).
- 16 Miles Horsey, *Tenements and Towers* (Edinburgh, 1990).
- 17 *Tower Block*, pp. 285–314; J. A. Oliver, *Working at Stormont* (Dublin, 1978); T. O'Neill, *Autobiography* (Dublin, 1972); C. E. Brett, *Housing a Divided Community* (Dublin, 1986).
- 18 *Architectural Review*, Jan. 1948, p. 9; *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects*, May 1961, p. 256. See also: Rosemary Hill, *God's Architect* (London, 2007); Ian Nairn, *Your England Revisited* (London, 1964); Ian Nairn, *Outrage* (London, 1955 and 1959); *Tower Block*, pp. 105–9.
- 19 Noel Annan, *Our Age* (London, 1990); Lionel Esher, *A Broken Wave: The Rebuilding of England 1940–1980* (London, 1981); Andrew Saint, *Towards a Social Architecture: The Role of School-Building in Post-War England* (London, 1987); Saint, *Image of the Architect*.
- 20 Mumford, *CIAM Discourse*, pp. 201ff.
- 21 Bullock, *Building the Post-War World*; Gold, *Experience of Modernism*; Gold, *Practice of Modernism*.
- 22 *Tower Block*, pp. 121–31.
- 23 *Ibid.*, p. 146; R. B. White, *Prefabrication* (London, 1965); Brian Finnimore, *Houses from the Factory* (London, 1987).
- 24 *Tower Block*, pp. 147–8, 308–9; D. Walker, *Architecture and Planning of Milton Keynes* (London, 1981); N. Taylor, *The Village in the City* (London, 1973); Esher, *Broken Wave*.
- 25 J. M. Richards, *The Castles on the Ground* (London, 1946); Taylor, *Village*.
- 26 Bernard Rudofsky, *Architecture without Architects* (New York, 1964).
- 27 W. E. Jackson, *Achievement: A Short History of the London County Council* (London, 1965); Miles Glendinning, *Modern Architect: The Life and Times of Robert Matthew* (London, 2008), pp. 119–20.
- 28 *Tower Block*, pp. 269, 278–81.
- 29 *Ibid.*, pp. 260–2.
- 30 F. J. Osborn and W. Whittick, *New Towns* (London, 1977).
- 31 T. Begg, *Fifty Special Years* (Edinburgh, 1987); SSHA, *A Chronicle of Forty Years* (Edinburgh, 1977); J. S. Gibson, *The Thistle and the Crown* (Edinburgh, 1985).
- 32 *Tower Block*, p. 287.
- 33 *Ibid.*, pp. 247–54; Lynsey Hanley, *Estates* (London, 2007).
- 34 *Tower Block*, pp. 240, 259–60, 280–2.
- 35 Interviews with R. Stones and Martin Richardson, 1987.
- 36 Glendinning and Watters, *Home Builders*, pp. 224–57; *Tower Block*, p. 217.
- 37 Horsey, *Tenements and Towers*; *Tower Block*, pp. 220–40; Glasgow Corporation Housing Department, *Review of Operations 1919–1947* (Glasgow, 1948); A. G. Jury, *Glasgow's Housing Centenary* (Glasgow, 1966).
- 38 *Tower Block*, pp. 240–3; Glendinning and Watters, *Home Builders*, pp. 243–55.
- 39 *Tower Block*, p. 217.

## Chapter 10

# From Longhouse to Live/Work Unit

## Parallel Histories and Absent Narratives

*Frances Holliss*

### Introduction

On setting a 'live/work' building as a student design project, a gap in knowledge was found. There was, ostensibly, no established literature on the dual-use building type that combines dwelling and workplace, no books that mapped out and analysed its history or contemporary form. But lots of fragmented and hidden material was found, often disguised in publications about houses or workplaces, about individual buildings or architects' oeuvres, or about particular geographical locations or periods of history.<sup>1</sup> This chapter is mostly drawn from the much greater knowledge of the historians responsible for these sources. What is offered here is an idea or a theme.

Buildings that combine dwelling and workplace have existed for hundreds, if not thousands, of years, but have not previously been considered as an identifiable 'type'. A physical separation between workplace and dwelling was both an inevitable consequence of industrial capitalism and its invaluable tool. Employers gained an unprecedented degree of control over their workforces in collective workplaces made necessary by industrial processes, thus maximizing profits from industrialized production. But in the contemporary global economy, supported by information technologies, the geographical location of a great deal of work is immaterial. The home-based workforce is, as a result, now growing rapidly, both globally and in the UK.<sup>2</sup> A study of these dual-use buildings therefore has considerable contemporary relevance.

But can these buildings be considered as an identifiable type? In the eighteenth century, the Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus developed a system for the classification of biological sciences that is still in use, and two French thinkers, the neo-classical architect J. N. L. Durand, and the art critic and philosopher



Quatremère de Quincy, started a debate about architectural classification and typology that continues today.<sup>3</sup> Each proposed a typology that has been absorbed into mainstream architectural thought: Durand's involved the axis and the grid as compositional tools, while de Quincy classified all buildings into three basic categories, 'hut', 'cave' and 'tent', according to their form, material and structural system. Numerous architects and commentators, for example Louis Kahn and Johann F. Geist, have since developed further architectural typologies, while others, such as John Weeks and Florian Beigel, have questioned the continuing relevance of architectural typology. Pevsner wrote a renowned history of building types, in which he referred to the dwelling as a building type,<sup>4</sup> and it is in this very broad sense that 'type' is used in this chapter. Classifying buildings according to function enables a comparison and cross-analysis of like buildings; it is a commonly adopted strategy in architectural histories.<sup>5</sup> This system does not, however, generally acknowledge dual-use buildings. These tend to be classified according to their dominant function, their dual use often ignored or missed as a result. But the dual function is one of the central characteristics of these buildings; to investigate this effectively, they need to be considered together, as a group. So, in addition to the categories of 'dwelling' and 'workplace', a further category is proposed: the building that combines the functions of dwelling and workplace.<sup>6</sup> The recognition of this 'type' involves an architectural reclassification that makes possible the development of a body of knowledge about these buildings.

This chapter will trace a brief history of this building type through both vernacular and canonical architectural traditions. It will discuss difficulties encountered in assessing the day-to-day effectiveness of these buildings. Identifying a common tendency in both historical fields to focus on the material form of the building, it will suggest that a more anthropological approach to the analysis of both canonical and vernacular architecture may make a useful contribution to the development of architectural knowledge and practice.

## Terminology

There is, firstly, a need for a brief discussion on terminology. The building that combines dwelling and workplace is an age-old type, but it seems to have resisted collection and classification. In 1751 Carl Linnaeus said 'If you do not know the name of things, the knowledge of them is lost too'.<sup>7</sup> This may be key. Until the Industrial Revolution, the building type that combined dwelling and workplace was called 'house', with subsets of ale-house, weaver's house, studio-house, etc. But through the twentieth century 'house' gradually came to mean a building in which we cook, eat, sleep, bathe and watch TV, nothing more. As a result the dual-use building that combines dwelling and workplace became nameless – until the term 'live/work' was coined in the 1970s.

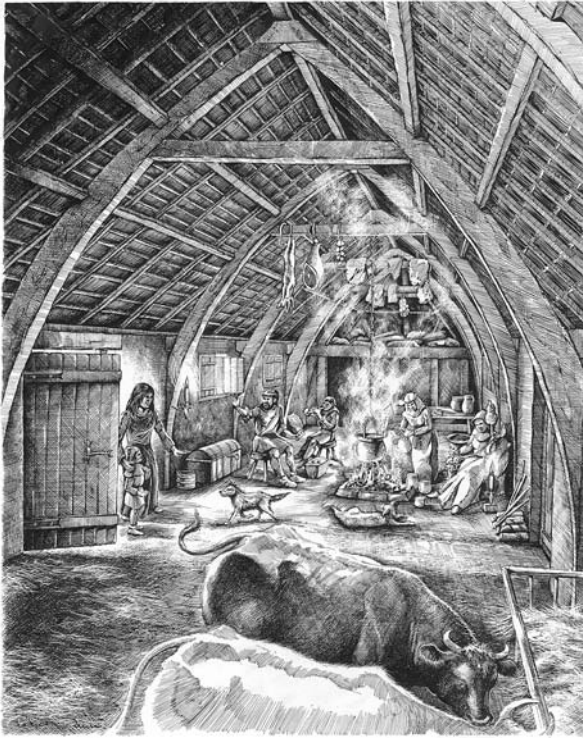
Initially the term 'live/work' was used in this research to refer to buildings that combine the functions of dwelling and workplace, but it soon became clear that there were problems with this. First, the term is closely associated with the loft-style apartment, and as a result discussions of 'live/work' tend to ignore the wide range of other buildings that combine dwelling and workplace. Second, 'live/work' was found not to be a neutral term. One of the side effects of the initial success of the

'live/work' movement in the London Borough of Hackney was the loss of a light-industrial employment district to residential development.<sup>8</sup> This has also occurred elsewhere, notably in the SoMa area of San Francisco, and as a result, some, particularly planners, regard 'live/work' with suspicion and hostility. This can undermine the otherwise generally accepted importance of mixed-use areas in the creation of busy, and therefore lively and safe, cities, towns and villages. Recognizing these difficulties, a neutral, generic term ('workhome') has been coined to describe all buildings that combine dwelling and workplace, in the same way that 'dwelling' describes all the buildings we live in, and 'workplace' describes all the buildings we work in.

## Parallel histories

In medieval times, buildings that combined dwelling and workplace were almost universal. As members of self-sufficient and self-reproducing communities, most people had lives that involved a combination of both productive and domestic work, undifferentiated and indistinguishable. The clearly defined class distinctions of the time did, however, determine quite different lifestyles for people according to their social status, and the buildings of the time reflected this. A snapshot of mid-fourteenth-century life might include three typical houses, the peasant's longhouse, the merchant's house and the manor house. Their spaces were sometimes indeterminate, transforming according to activity, time of day or night, or season, and sometimes determinate, accommodating the separate functions of dwelling and workplace in distinct but adjacent spaces. The longhouse was home and workplace to peasants in areas of England where animals needed to be brought inside at night and in the winter. All the activities of daily life were carried out in the spaces in and around this single-storeyed open-plan building in which the animals lived at one end and the people at the other (Figure 10.1).<sup>9</sup> A parallel can be drawn between the longhouse and the contemporary live/work unit: both often consist of a double-height space with a mezzanine sleeping-platform that has storage underneath. The merchant's house, by contrast, typically had a sequence of ground-floor spaces where commerce and family life were interwoven; the first-floor bedrooms alone were for the private use of the family. The manor house was characteristically home and workplace to a large household, its spaces transforming according to time of day or function. The central hall was, in principle if not in practice, the dining space for all and sleeping space for many. Every few weeks it would transform into a courtroom where the business of the estate was carried out. The aristocratic family had separate sleeping quarters for itself and its closest servants; these might also have doubled as a sitting/retiring room or even as a chapel. Some other members of the household slept in their working spaces.<sup>10</sup>

Until the Industrial Revolution, the practice of home-based work remained the norm in a wide range of occupations across the social spectrum. Craft-workers often inhabited houses that incorporated workshops. These were built in a variety of forms and are well documented.<sup>11</sup> London had a substantial community of silk-weavers from the mid-seventeenth century; a few continued in the trade into the early twentieth century.<sup>12</sup> Weavers' houses differed in terms of spatial organization, scale and grandeur according to social status and the relations of production.<sup>13</sup> It is



**10.1**  
Reconstruction  
of daily life in  
a medieval  
longhouse in  
the deserted  
medieval village  
of Wharram  
Percy, North  
Yorkshire.

probable that a prosperous silk artisan ran his family business at 16 Elder Street, Spitalfields, built in 1724 (Figure 10.2). The wide arched windows indicate the likely position of large loom-shops at second- and third-floor levels, smaller windows suggesting living accommodation on the ground and first floors. The large upper windows were designed to maximize natural light, silk thread being very fine and difficult to see; they tend to indicate the positions of looms. The provision of an equivalent amount of space for both living and work suggests a household structure in which members of the family, apprentices and journeymen lived and worked together, all working the looms and eating as a large extended family. The different functions would have been accommodated separately and in combination; apprentices and journeymen would have slept among the looms. By the end of the eighteenth century, however, the building was probably in multiple occupation, a family of silk-workers living and working in every room. The organization of this type of weavers' establishment was different to the arrangements in both the elegant early eighteenth-century silk-masters' houses in Fournier Street, with their garrets altered for weaving, and the humble early nineteenth-century houses of weavers working in the continuing 'putting out', or 'domestic' system, where the single loom-shop was positioned at first-floor level in houses designed with separate loom-shops over living spaces (Figures 10.3 and 10.4). An interior view gives an idea of the way the space came to be used, the weaver at the loom, flooded with natural light from the window, while a family member sits at the table with a half-finished meal.

**10.2**  
Weaver's  
house at 16  
Elder Street,  
Spitalfields,  
London, 1724.  
Photographed in  
1955.



**10.3**  
Early nineteenth-  
century weavers'  
houses,  
Crossland  
Square, Bethnal  
Green, London.  
Photographed in  
1954.





**10.4**  
Interior of early  
nineteenth-  
century  
Bethnal Green  
weaver's house.  
Photographed in  
1894.

In Coventry these dual-use buildings were called 'top-shops', as the workshop was generally positioned on the top floor, to maximize natural light. Once again, large windows for the working space contrast with smaller windows for the living accommodation below. Different trades had individual requirements: while loom-shops needed to be glazed front and rear to maximize light on the loom, watchmakers only needed a single aspect to their workshops, as they worked at a bench under a large window.<sup>14</sup> This may explain why watchmakers' workspaces were rarely visible from the street,<sup>15</sup> while weavers' windows often publicized the dual functions of a building. Watchmakers in Clerkenwell, by contrast, often worked in undifferentiated spaces.<sup>16</sup>

The invention of the power-loom led to the displacement of much weaving into factories, but many weavers resisted giving up home-based work.<sup>17</sup> In Coventry, developments of 'cottage factories' were built as a response. This was an innovatory building type – terraces of weavers' houses with a steam engine positioned either at the end or at the centre of the terrace. Driveshafts from the engines linked power-looms in all the top-storey loom-shops. Cash's One Hundred (Figure 10.5) was built in 1857 by the Cash brothers, philanthropic Quakers, in the Kingfield district of Coventry. It was an attempt to maintain the independence of the traditional weaving household while simultaneously keeping up with the technical innovations of the time, in order to remain financially viable.<sup>18</sup> One hundred cottage factories were planned, but only forty-eight were built, in two blocks, one of which flanked the canal. Three-storeys high, each consisted of two floors of 'two up, two down' domestic accommodation with a large weaving studio above. This was double-height, to accommodate the 3.9m-high Jacquard loom, and was accessed

10.5

Cash's One  
Hundred cottage  
factory, Kingfield,  
Coventry, 1857,  
front elevation.  
Photographed in  
2004.



by a ladder from the living quarters below. Again, large windows, here very tall, maximized natural light.

A substantial proportion of the population continued in home-based work throughout the Industrial Revolution, especially in London. Evidence of this can be found in the survey of poverty in London made by Charles Booth between 1889 and 1903. His team of investigators walked every street of London twice and interviewed many individuals about their lives, recording what they found in more than 350 notebooks.<sup>19</sup> Although Booth's interest was poverty, his survey was so detailed that it can be used to extract other information. It contains observations of the daily lives of the people of London, including descriptions of their paid employment and its physical context, and therefore provides evidence of the extent to which people were involved in home-based work. The notebooks indicate that people of all classes continued to work at home, either in their dwellings or in adjacent buildings or yards, or, as in the case of factory owners, schoolteachers or caretakers, to live at their workplaces. Even the factory workers tended to live in either the same street as their workplace or in an adjacent street. In general it was only those employed in the City who travelled any distance to their work. An analysis of all the references to people working at home in south-east London and in the Bethnal Green and Hackney

areas of north-east London shows more than 120 different home-based occupations. These included manufacturing (particularly textiles and furniture-making), service industries, trade, agriculture, religion and education, as well as a variety of professional occupations. Photographic evidence supports this. In some cases the work is carried out within the dwelling; photographs give glimpses of patterned wallpaper and domestic fireplaces (Figure 10.6). In other cases it was carried out in buildings specifically designed around the dual function, such as the shop or workshop with living accommodation above (Figure 10.7).

So, the history of the workhome can readily be traced through vernacular architectural tradition. But it can also without difficulty be traced through canonical, or polite, architectural history. There is a long tradition of artists living in their studios, or working in their homes. The dual-use artist's studio-house has a distinguished, although little publicized, architectural history. Hundreds of examples unearthed by Giles Walkley in London range from the opulent to the humble.<sup>20</sup> Reyner Banham wrote briefly about others in Paris.<sup>21</sup> Characterized by vast expanses of glass, and the juxtaposition of large-volume working spaces with conventionally scaled living spaces, these buildings are often quirky both in terms of their form and their elevations, the architecture reflecting the dual functions of dwelling and studio, in a way similar to what is seen in the silk-weavers' houses and cottage factories.

Norman Shaw's house of 1876 for the artist Marcus Stone, in Kensington, was spatially stratified according to function (Figure 10.8). The lower ground floor, with the meanest floor-to-ceiling height and smallest windows, provided servants' accommodation. The family living spaces on the ground floor included three bedrooms, a dining and a drawing room, on a grand, but domestic, scale. The entire first floor was given over to a double-height studio lit by three tall oriel windows, a number of roof lights, and a large western window. A greenhouse area allowed Stone to paint his subjects 'al fresco' all year round. Strict social protocols were observed in such buildings. Here, the inclusion of three separate stairs was designed to prevent



10.6  
'Our toy factory':  
home-based  
work in a  
domestic  
environment in  
east London,  
c.1915, from *The  
Home Front* by  
Sylvia Pankhurst,  
published 1932.

**10.7**  
Nineteenth-century  
speculative  
'shop-houses'  
in Brick Lane,  
Spitalfields, first  
occupied by a  
grocer, a draper,  
a cabinet-  
maker and  
their families.  
Photographed in  
1955.



**10.8**  
Studio-house  
built for Marcus  
Stone, artist,  
Melbury Road,  
Holland Park,  
London, 1876,  
Richard Norman  
Shaw, architect.  
Photographed in  
1994.





occasional meetings between the family, the servants, and the not-very-respectable model.<sup>22</sup>

The Modern Movement embraced workhomes. In 1923, Le Corbusier built a studio for the French artist Amédée Ozenfant, in Paris (Figure 10.9). The top floor consisted of a large double-height studio/living space, lit by extensive areas of glass and north-facing roof-lights. The ground- and first-floor spaces had domestic-scale storey heights and horizontal bands of glazing. An external spiral stair led from the street to the first-floor front door. The artist's first-floor kitchen, bedroom, bathroom, 'museum' and gallery were linked to the ground-floor concierge's flat and garage by an internal stair.

Bernard Bivjoet and Pierre Chareau designed the Maison de Verre for Dr Dalsace, a young Parisian doctor, and his wife in 1932 (Figure 10.10). While its name suggests it is a house, the building in fact combined a family home with a suite of gynaecologist's consulting rooms; the doctor's house is, of course, a well-established vernacular workhome type. Sliding perforated metal screens around the staircase separated the ground-floor doctor's surgery from the main double-height living room above. Sliding doors also separated the doctor's first-floor study from the main 'salon', and a tiny dogleg stair linked his study to his ground-floor consulting rooms. The second-floor mezzanine housed three en-suite bedrooms. A service wing, accessed by its own stair, was organized across all three levels.

The Eames House, built by Charles and Ray Eames in Los Angeles in 1949, was also a workhome. Consisting of two buildings, the smaller, closest to



**10.9**  
Atelier Ozenfant,  
Paris, 1924,  
Le Corbusier,  
architect.

## 10.10

The Maison de Verre, Paris, 1932, Bernard Bivjoet and Pierre Chareau, architects (from Dominique Vellay, *La Maison de Verre, Pierre Chareau's Modernist Masterwork*, 2007).



the road, was the Eames's studio. Their dwelling was the larger building, set back from the road and across a small courtyard from the studio. Both buildings were organized around a double-height space and mezzanine, with storage and service spaces below. As the Eames design firm grew, it moved into larger premises. But as Charles and Ray Eames did not distinguish their 'work' from the rest of their lives, their home-based studio continued in regular use.<sup>23</sup>

Workhomes can regularly be found on the pages of contemporary architectural journals. The Bordeaux House of 1998 by Rem Koolhaas, for example, was built as dwelling and workplace for a writer who uses a wheelchair. His workspace, a study, takes the form of a central room-sized lift. The lift-shaft is lined with books, so the vertical movement of the lift allows access to all the bookshelves from the wheelchair. The family living spaces wrap around this workspace: bedrooms and bathrooms on the first floor, and kitchen/dining/living rooms on the ground floor.

The Strawbale House of 2001 in north London, by Sarah Wigglesworth Architects, is also a workhome. Combining an architectural office with a family home, the 'L' shaped building is raised on piloti, with the (strawbale) home in one wing and the (quilted) office in the other. A single gate from the street leads to separate entrances for the two sections. The office door is on axis, reached via a formal colonnade created by the structure of the office above. The house entrance, by contrast, involves a meandering route through the vegetable garden, past chickens and bicycles. A meeting room sits at the pivot-point between the home and office,<sup>24</sup> with a sliding wall between it and the open-plan kitchen/dining/living space, which is kept shut during the working day. At night, however, the plane slides open and this

intermediary space, which doubles as a formal dining room, forms an internal route between living and working spaces.

Many 'live/work' buildings have been built over the past twenty years. While the name celebrates dual use, there has been considerable debate about the underlying reality. The 'live/work' movement began in the 1960s when artists moved into disused, and often neglected, light-industrial buildings in the SoHo area of New York. The use of these lofts as combined living-and-working spaces was illegal to start with because it contravened a light-industrial zoning restriction. After protracted negotiations with the local authority, this was relaxed to permit professional artists to both live and work in the large, open-span, well-lit spaces.

Thousands of artists moved into the area, creating a lively and unconventional neighbourhood. Financiers, developers and politicians swiftly became aware of the immense potential value of the area and its buildings and started to buy up and develop properties. They coined the phrase 'live/work' as part of a branding exercise to market these properties. Commercial pressure led, over time, to the zoning restriction being further relaxed. While at first the inhabitants had to be working artists, this was later relaxed to permit people who were involved in the world of art, and then people who were just *interested* in the world of art, to inhabit these 'live/work' apartments. Finally, the zoning restriction was dropped altogether, and over a period of ten years the area was transformed into a smart residential neighbourhood. The original artists and residual light industry were priced out of the district.<sup>25</sup>

This pattern was repeated in cities across the developed world. In the London Borough of Hackney alone more than 1,000 'live/work' units were developed between 2000 and 2004.<sup>26</sup> Stephen Davy Peter Smith Architects built fifty-seven 'live/work' units on four levels at King's Wharf in 2001 (Figure 10.11), with the intention of creating a living-and-working creative cluster. Each has a double-height space with kitchen, bathroom and bedroom tucked underneath a mezzanine. While each unit is accessed by an industrial-style lift, the internal spaces and finishes suggest a dominant residential use combined with clean, quiet work, maybe IT-based. This scheme was at the centre of a local controversy about whether 'live/work' buildings were, in reality, dual-use, or whether they were purely residential. Other purpose-designed workhomes, referred to as 'work/live' units, have been consciously designed to have a dominant workplace use.

Tracing these histories has exposed the tip of an iceberg. This previously unidentified building type includes a great many separate sub-groups. Each has its own history, and many of these have yet to be written.

## Absent narratives

Architectural commentary often ignores the day-to-day inhabitation of a building, and it has been difficult to find evidence of how the buildings considered here actually functioned at a day-to-day level. Despite their different areas of interest within the architectural field, vernacular studies and architectural history have both been found to have a similarly narrow focus on the material form of buildings. But workhomes inevitably combine two functions, and these often conflict programmatically, maybe in terms of quiet/noisy, clean/dirty or public/private. This is a fact that appears largely

# 10.11

Live/work  
units at King's  
Wharf, Hackney,  
London, 2001,  
Stephen Davy  
Peter Smith  
Architects.



to have gone unnoticed. The cottage factory was a family house plus a workshop, the Maison de Verre a family house and doctor's surgery: these combinations of functions raise many questions.

Canonical buildings are often considered primarily as art objects, their social function having a secondary importance. They tend to be written about almost exclusively in terms of their form and spatiality, their technology, materiality and quality of light. Although vernacular buildings are often considered in social-historical contexts, it is often still difficult to find out how they function on a day-to-day basis. An understanding of how two functions are combined in a single building is necessary to assess the overall nature of that building.

How effective were the cottage factory and Maison de Verre as workhomes? To what extent did the form of the building meet the functional or symbolic requirements of the two uses? What impact did the workplace have on family life, and vice versa? The buildings give us some clues. In Cash's One Hundred, large windows to the weaving lofts were clearly intended to provide higher levels of

natural light than can usually be found in a standard dwelling. But large areas of glass can lead to problems with overheating and glare. How did the weaver's loft function on sunny days? An indicator lies in the discovery that many Coventry weavers' windows were systematically installed out of plumb. This has been interpreted as an attempt to reduce glare.<sup>27</sup> Cash's One Hundred was converted into social housing in the 1980s by inserting a floor into the weaving lofts. The resulting maisonettes suffer from excessive solar gain as a result of the large expanses of glass, but no evidence has been found to confirm whether the original double-height weaving lofts had the same problem. The elderly contemporary owner of a mid-nineteenth century watch-maker's top-shop, however, who had painted out most of its extensive glazing, said she would replace it with 'ordinary windows' if she could afford to, as the solar gain in summer and heat loss in winter made the space uninhabitable.<sup>28</sup> In addition, handloom weaving was a noisy and dirty process, yet keeping the finished textiles clean was vital. At the 'Soierie Vivante' in Lyons,<sup>29</sup> a preserved nineteenth-century silk-weaver's apartment in the Croix Rousse district, the acoustic impact of mechanized looms can be experienced at first hand. Silk waste was stuffed between the joists in the floors between loom-shops and living spaces in nineteenth-century weavers' houses in London and Coventry in attempts to improve the acoustic separation between the dwelling and workplace parts of the building.<sup>30</sup> Adjacent loom-shops would also have made noisy neighbours. The weaving lofts at Cash's One Hundred might have been accessed by ladders and trapdoors, rather than by staircases, to maximize the floor areas of the working spaces. This might also have reduced the impact of the noise and dirt generated by the weaving process on the family homes below. There is little written evidence to confirm or refute such hypotheses.

Similarly, in the Maison de Verre the doctor's surgery was a public space, requiring a calm and quiet atmosphere. But this workhome was designed as a single open volume, without spatial or acoustic separation between the doctor's rooms on the ground floor and the private family home above. Family life can be anything but calm and quiet. How did this work? What constraints did it place on family life? How were the public and private aspects of the programme negotiated? Again, the building gives us some clues. We know that it had a triple doorbell (Figure 10.12), and that the bells for 'doctor', 'visitors', and 'tradesmen' made different sounds, to enable the right person to answer the door.<sup>31</sup> In addition we know that there were sliding screens. The main screen remained closed unless 'there were guests, [when] both sides were opened',<sup>32</sup> to discourage patients from absent-mindedly wandering upstairs into the private family home. However, Dominique Vellay, grand-daughter to Dr and Mme Dalsace, also describes the Maison de Verre as 'an enormous sound box; I could hear the sound of my grandfather's study sliding open and shut and the rush of water through the pipes'.<sup>33</sup> This suggests a lack of acoustic separation, potentially as problematic as in a cottage factory. That Dr Dalsace had a sound-proofed telephone booth in his study where he could have conversations with his clients without being overheard seems to acknowledge and address this issue.

It is difficult to identify the advantages and disadvantages of the different design approaches embodied in these buildings without information on how they functioned in daily use. This limits our understanding of them as buildings

10.12

Triple doorbell  
at the Maison  
de Verre (from  
Dominique  
Vellay, *La Maison  
de Verre*, Pierre  
Chateau's  
*Modernist  
Masterwork*,  
2007).



and, therefore, their usefulness as precedents for contemporary practice. In order to investigate the contemporary form of this building type, a study has been made of seventy-six workhomes in urban, suburban and rural contexts in England.<sup>34</sup> Recognizing the limitation inherent in restricting such a study to the material form of the buildings, the research borrowed from sociological methodologies and placed as much emphasis on interviews with the inhabitants about their occupations, lifestyles and inhabitation of space, as on the buildings themselves. It was found that some prize-winning pieces of architecture that conform to ideas of the ideal designer 'live/work' environment can have drawbacks in use, while other, very ordinary, buildings can provide ideal environments for working practices.

Three architects used their self-designed studio-houses as 'living, breathing (business) cards' for their practices, despite the fact that their buildings did not, in some ways, perform well as workhomes. Characterized by fluid, well-proportioned and often double-height spaces, with elegant forms, large areas of glazing, and modern, carefully detailed materials, they signaled 'good design' to prospective clients. In reality, one building had an awkward overlap between the public and private use, two were problematic acoustically, and one performed poorly thermally. But even the facts that there were problems of spatial adjacency in one, and that the kitchen table proved a better working space than the specially designed work-area in another, appeared not to be a problem for either the architects or their prospective clients. The central issue was that these award-winning workhomes aligned with the *idea* of the 'well-designed architect's studio-house'.

By contrast, some very ordinary buildings were found to provide excellent environments for home-based work. A building surveyor had a sick wife, in and out of

hospital; he needed to be able to combine his work with caring for his family. Finding he was interrupted too much when he tried to work in his modest terraced house, he had a Portakabin craned into his diminutive garden, a few steps from his back door, and set up office there (Figure 10.13). The functions did not overlap: the house was used for purely domestic purposes, and his work was contained in the Portakabin. This arrangement suited him and his family well. Similarly, a suburban hairdresser started working from home when she became a single parent. Hating having her clients in her home, as well as having to live with the smell of the chemicals and the discarded hair, she built a small extension onto the back of her semi-detached house in which she set up her 'hair room', a fully equipped salon (Figure 10.14). With a separate side entrance, a WC, a small waiting area and a lockable door to the house, this removed the need for her clients and employees to enter her home. It also stopped the house smelling of chemicals and contained the mess from the hair.

Although lacking architectural quality, these two workhomes precisely met the functional needs of their inhabitants. Both worked with employees and invited members of the public into their workspace. In each case the workhome combined the conflicting programmes of the two different functions in a way that provided the inhabitant with the desired degree of spatial separation between dwelling and workplace. This contrasts with the celebrated and published purpose-built high architectural buildings, which might have been expected to provide the ideal environment for home-based work, but were in fact found to be problematic.

## Conclusion

This discussion of an old, but neglected, building type that combines dwelling and workplace – the workhome – has uncovered some issues of contemporary relevance. These buildings have generally previously been considered according to their dominant function, either as dwellings or workplaces, their dual use ignored



**10.13**  
Building-  
surveyor's  
office set up in  
a Portakabin in  
his back garden  
in Hackney,  
east London.  
Photographed in  
2006.

10.14

Home-based hairdresser's 'hair room' in a rear extension to her semi-detached house in a London suburb. Photographed in 2006.



or hidden. But when assessed as dual-use buildings, the two functions have been found often to have conflicting programmes. As conventional architectural commentary tends to focus on the material form of a building alone, and these conflicts may not be visible, this has often not been acknowledged. More or less successful strategies can be identified to address these conflicts, both in canonical pieces of high architecture and in vernacular buildings. But without an overt discussion of the dual-use nature of these buildings, it has been possible neither to develop a body of knowledge regarding the advantages and disadvantages of different design strategies, nor to assess the success or otherwise of individual buildings. Attempts to consider buildings in this way have been hampered by a lack of evidence about functionality in daily use.

Did the Coventry weavers suffer from chronic chest problems as a result of the circulation of weaving dust through their cottage factories? Were the Dalsace children kept unnaturally quiet, or even removed from the *Maison de Verre*, when the doctor's surgery was open? These questions are not just of marginal interest or importance. In the context of the current rapid rise in the size of the home-based workforce, in the UK and globally, it is probable that we will need increasingly to design our buildings and our cities around home-based work. The production of a generation of workhomes in the form of 'live/work' units that do not generally meet the needs of most home-based workers suggests that we are ill equipped to do this. In this research, some architect-designed dual-use buildings were found to function poorly and, conversely, some ordinary, vernacular buildings were found to



function well. It is only through close scrutiny of both the lives and the premises of the home-based workforce that this emerged. We are used to discussing the fabric of buildings, the spaces, the quality of light and materiality and structure. But we are not used to employing the evidence of inhabitants to determine how effectively buildings function in everyday use. In the case of the workhome, this has been found to be important. The findings from this research suggest that a more anthropological approach to the analysis of both canonical and vernacular architecture may make a useful contribution to the development of architectural knowledge and practice.

## Notes

- 1 For example: Gwyn I. Meirion-Jones, 'The Long House', *Medieval Archaeology* 17 (1973), pp. 135–7; John M. Prest, *The Industrial Revolution in Coventry* (Oxford, 1960), p. 8; Tadao Ando, *Tadao Ando: Complete Works* Francisco Dal Co, ed. (London, 1995); eds P. S. Barnwell, Marilyn Palmer and Malcolm Airs, *The Vernacular Workshop: From Craft to Industry 1400–1900* (York, 2004), pp. 1–16, 60–74; Tim Benton, *The Villas of Le Corbusier, 1920–1930* (London, 1987), pp. 35–43; Dominique Vellay, *La Maison de Verre: Pierre Chareau's Modernist Masterwork* (London, 2007).
- 2 Tim Dwelly, *Living at Work: A New Policy Framework for Modern Home Workers* (Penzance, 2000), p. 8.
- 3 Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand, *Précis des leçons d'architecture données à l'École polytechnique* (Paris, 1802); Antoine Quatremère de Quincy, *Architecture* (Paris, 1788); Giulio C. Argan, 'On the Typology of Architecture', *Architectural Design*, 33 (1963); Gunther Pfeifer and Per Brauneck, *Row Houses: A Housing Typology* (Basel, 2007); Rafael Moneo, 'On Typology', *Oppositions*, 13 (1978).
- 4 Nikolaus Pevsner, *A History of Building Types* (London, 1976), pp. 9, 352.
- 5 Johann F. Geist, *Arcades: The History of a Building Type* (London, 1983); Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (London, 1992); Sir Banister F. Fletcher, *Sir Banister Fletcher's A History of Architecture* (London, 1996); Douglas B. Hague and Rosemary Christie, *Lighthouses: Their Architecture, History and Archaeology* (Llandysul, 1975); Edgar Jones, *Industrial Architecture in Britain, 1750–1939* (London, 1985); eds Stuart Lowe and David N. Hughes, *A New Century of Social Housing* (Leicester, 1991); Dennis Sharp, *A Visual History of Twentieth-Century Architecture* (Greenwich, Conn., 1979).
- 6 Buildings in which people carry out both the domestic aspects of their lives and their productive (usually paid) work.
- 7 Carl von Linné, *Linnaeus' Philosophia Botanica*, trans. Stephen Freer (Oxford, 2002).
- 8 London Residential Research, 'Review of Live-Work Policy in Hackney' (London, 2005).
- 9 Maurice W. Beresford and John Hurst, *English Heritage Book of Wharham Percy: Deserted Medieval Village* (London, 1990). See also: Susanna Wade Martins, *Historic Farm Buildings* (London, 1991) and P. S. Barnwell and Colum Giles, *English Farmsteads, 1750–1914* (Swindon, 1997).
- 10 A Caister Castle inventory of around 1431 showed that 'some servants were accommodated in their offices; in the bakehouse there was a mattress, blanket, sheet and coverlet; grooms slept in the stable; sumpter's stable was endowed with bedding; gardener's chamber had two mattresses, two bolsters, one pair of sheets, two blankets, one old carpet, three coverings or coverlets and a celure (worn) of blue'. Falstof Paper 43, Magdalen College, Oxford, cited in T. Hosking, *Family Life in Medieval Britain* (Hove, 1994), p. 63. See also, John Bold, 'Privacy and the Plan', in *English Architecture Public and Private: Essays for Kerry Downes*, eds John Bold, Edward Chaney and Kerry Downes (London, 1993), for a discussion of the development of the concept of privacy in English domestic architecture.
- 11 eds Barnwell, Palmer and Airs, *Vernacular Workshop*; Prest, *Coventry*.
- 12 Booth Archive, London School of Economics (LSE) library, Booth notebook B350 (Bethnal Green, Seabright Street): 'A few looms remaining but mostly become small cabinet makers' workshops,

- men who make at home and sell to the large wholesale houses in Curtain Rd. This and the next street, Viaduct Street, are the centre for home cabinet work and weaving’.
- 13 Marilyn Palmer, ‘The Workshop: Type of Building or Method of Work?’, in eds Barnwell, Palmer and Airst, *Vernacular Workshop*, pp. 1–16.
  - 14 Prest, *Coventry*, pp. 82–3.
  - 15 Ibid.
  - 16 See, for example, ed. Philip Temple, *South and East Clerkenwell*, Survey of London 46 (London, 2008), p. 105.
  - 17 Marilyn Palmer and Peter A. Neaverson, ‘Handloom Weaving in Wiltshire and Gloucestershire in the 19th Century: The Building Evidence’, *Post-Medieval Archaeology*, 37 (2003), pp. 126–58.
  - 18 Prest, *Coventry*, p. 94.
  - 19 Those for south-east London are transcribed in Charles Booth and Jess Steele, *The Streets of London: The Booth Notebooks* (London, 1997). All the originals are held in the Booth Archive at the LSE library.
  - 20 Giles Walkley, *Artists’ Houses in London 1764–1914* (Aldershot, 1994).
  - 21 Reyner Banham, ‘Ateliers d’Artistes: Paris Studio Houses and the Modern Movement’, *Architectural Review* (August 1956), pp. 75–84.
  - 22 Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, ‘Artists’ Studios, Supplementary Planning Guidance’, (2002).
  - 23 E. Demetrios, *An Eames Primer* (London, 2001), p. 272.
  - 24 Described by Sarah Wigglesworth as a ‘pompous space’ (Interview 13 Sept. 2007).
  - 25 Sharon Zukin, *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change* (London, 1988), p. 240.
  - 26 London Residential Research, ‘Review of Live-Work Policy in Hackney’, p. 67.
  - 27 Interview with Malcolm Adkins, a Coventry top-shop restorer, 14 June 2004.
  - 28 Interview with anonymous owner of a top-shop in Norfolk Street, Coventry, 14 June 2004.
  - 29 [www.soierie-vivante.asso.fr]
  - 30 ed. F. H. W. Sheppard, *Spitalfields and Mile End New Town*, Survey of London 27 (London, 1957), p. 199; Prest, *Coventry*, p. 75.
  - 31 Vellay, *Maison*, p. 7.
  - 32 Ibid., p. 18.
  - 33 Ibid., p. 8.
  - 34 Frances Holliss, ‘The Workhome . . . a New Building Type?’ (doctoral thesis, London Metropolitan University, 2007).



# Index

Note: page numbers in **bold** refer to figures and tables.

- Aberdeen 184  
Ackerman, James 49  
Ackworth School 76–7, 92  
agency 163  
Aikin, John 90  
Albert Dock, Liverpool **159**  
Alderson, William 93  
altars 12, 35–6, 39–40, 43–4, 47, 80  
ancestors, selection of 163  
Angus, Peggy 153  
anonymity: and cultural reconciliation 164; and modernism 3, 145; promotion of 146–8, 154; and Quaker beliefs 78, 91  
anti-aesthetics 77, 158  
archaeology: and building analysis 8; industrial 158, 160, 170  
Archer, John 50, 52  
arches, tripartite 13–16  
Archigram 162, 164  
architectural debate, in Britain 176, 179  
architectural hierarchies 173  
architectural history: connotations of 1; public ramifications of 6–7; redefinition of 5–6; vernacular in 2–3  
*Architectural Review*: on architectural debate 176; Banham's criticism of 164–5; and British vernacular 158–9; on the dominions 155–6; and the Functional Tradition 151–2, 154, 156–9; and mass culture 160, 163; promotion of anonymity in 146, 163; Richards' editorial role at 145–6, 162; on USSR 149–50  
architectural typology 190  
architecture: definition of 5; astylistic 147–8; canonical 190, 196, 201; and culture 156–8; in eighteenth century 76; as field 4–5; and functional utility 203; popular appeal of 151; Richards' vision of 163; self-referentiality of 150; and social history 7–8; without architects 160, 179  
Arkin, David 149  
art: Marxist analysis of 153–4; modern 148; Pevsner on 155; in USSR 149–50  
Art History 34, 162  
artists: idealisation of 145; and live/work buildings 200; and live/work buildings *see also* studio-homes  
Arts and Crafts Exhibition 111  
Arts and Crafts movement: and interiors 116; and landscape protection 118–19; and local traditions 103, 107; and Tudoresque 124–5, 137–8, 141; and Wordsworth 108; Gibson's role in 100–1; houses in 112–13; myth of peasant builder in 106  
Ascott House, Bucks **128**  
Atelier Ozenfant, Paris **198**  
Atkinson, Peter (the Younger) 92  
Australia 162, 171  
avant-gardism 145–8, 155, 158–9, 170, 176, 183  
Avis, A-C. 95n17  
Avis, Joseph 76  
Baillie Scott, M. H. 101–2, 108, 120n21, 125, 137  
Ballantyne Report 174  
Banham, Reyner 158, 160, 163–4, 176  
Banqueting House, Whitehall, London 55  
Barbican 181  
Barley Barn, Cressing Temple, Essex 12, 23–4, 30  
Barrow Wife, Cumbria 78, **79**  
Bay Region Style 151, 153  
Benedict, Ruth 158  
Bentham, Jeremy 84–5, 90  
Bethnal Green **193**, 195  
Bevans, John 76, 81–4, 86–7, 89  
Bevis Marks Synagogue 76, 95n17  
Birket Houses, Cumbria 102–4, **102**, **105**, 108–10, 115–16, 120n21  
Birmingham 183–4  
Bishopfield, Harlow, Essex 178  
Blackheath 52, **53**, 61, 64–5, **64**, 65, **66**

## Index

- blacksmiths 111–12  
Blackwell, Cumbria 101–2, 120n21  
Blaise Hamlet 125, **126**  
Board of Agriculture 130–1, 134–5  
Bodmin 34  
Booth, Charles 195  
Bootham Park Hospital *see* York Lunatic Asylum  
Bordeaux House 199  
Boston Manor 51  
Bourdieu, Pierre 4  
Brentford 52  
Brigflatts, Cumbria **78**, 80  
Bristol Meeting House 76  
Broadleys 101–2  
Brockhole, Cumbria 100, **101**, 105–6  
Browne, George 114  
Bunin, Andrei 149  
burials 43–4  
Burke, Edmund 132  
Bylinkin, Nikolai 149  
Bypass Variegated 138
- campanile 35  
carpentry 23–4, 26, 29  
Carr, John 74, 81, 83, 85  
Cash's One Hundred, Coventry 194, 201–2  
cathedrals, and church buildings 35, 44  
chancels 12, 33–5, 38–40, **38**, 42, 111  
Charlton House 52, 55  
Chelmsley Wood, West Midlands 183  
Chesterfield House *see* Ranger's House  
chimneys 25–6, 90, 104, 106–9, 118–19  
choir 17, 35–6  
church buildings: activities in 36–7, 39, 42–4; aisles in *see* nave aisles; common developments of 37–40; development of 44, 46; features of in medieval period 33–6  
church doctrine 38–40, 43  
CIAM (Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne) 145, 176  
classical-vernacular type 55  
Clerkenwell 194  
cloisters 13–14, 36  
cluster blocks **181**  
co-partnership housing 6  
Coldstream, Nicola 17  
Colthouse, Cumbria **78**, **80**  
Committee Room (York Retreat) 84, 90  
Common Farm, Cumbria 115  
common land 56, 59, 130–1  
compass geometry 12, 14, 17–20, 23, 25–6, 28  
consumption *see* culture, mass  
contextualism 4–5  
Continental Modern Movement 133  
Cooper, Nicholas 1, 50–1, 55  
The Corbels, Cumbria 99–100, **100**, 106, 118  
Cosmati pavement 22  
cottage factories 194–6, **195**, 201–2, 205  
cottages: in Lake District 106–7, 112, 114; in mass-housing 176; and peasantry 131–2; and Tudoresque 125, 127–8  
council housing *see* mass-housing programmes, in Britain  
Countersett, Yorkshire 78–80, **79**  
Coventry 182, 194, **195**, 202, 205  
Cragside, Northumberland **129**  
Cragwood, Cumbria 104  
creativity 135, 145  
Cromwell House, Highgate 55  
Croom's Hill, Greenwich 52, 54, 56, 59–60, 65  
Cullen, Gordon 164  
cultural anthropology 156  
cultural particularism 146, 158  
cultural policy 149–50, 160  
cultural unity 147, 154, 162  
culture: and anonymity 155; high 160, 164; mass 160, 162–4; material 7; religious 40  
Cumbernauld 178, 182  
Cumbrian dialect 109
- daisy-wheel design 12–16, **13**, **15**, 18–23, 25–30  
Dawstone, Cumbria 100–6, **101**, **105**, 108, 111–12, 115–16, 120n21  
de Maré, Eric 158  
de Quincy, Quatremère 189–90  
deck-access 177  
Defoe, Daniel 51–3  
density 176–8, 181  
design: potential for error in 20–1; pre-industrial 29–31  
design languages 11  
Devey, George 127–8  
Devonshire House, London 82  
Digby, Anne 82, 92  
direct labour organizations (DLO) 185–6  
diversity: and equality 7; and modernism 173–4; in post-war period 169–70, 186  
doctor's surgery 201–2, 205  
Dolbelydr, Denbighshire 27  
doors 15, 24, 34, 82, 90, 108, 115  
Dove Cottage, Cumbria 107  
Dundee 185  
Dunkerley, Frank 104  
Durham Cathedral 15  
Dutch House 55
- Eames House, Los Angeles 198–9  
East Anglia 34  
Ebbsfleet, Kent 28

- Eliot, T. S. 150, 160  
 elitism 179  
 Ellenthorpe Hall, Yorkshire **85**  
 Ellor Street Redevelopment Area, Salford **173**  
 Ely Cathedral **13**  
 enclosed land 61, 130–1  
 Enfield 55, 186  
 Exeter 36
- fakery 114  
 fascism 147, 150  
 Fellside, Cumbria 100  
 Ferguson, Robert 109–10  
 Fishbourne Palace, Sussex 28  
 folk design 110  
 fonts 35  
 formalism 153  
 Forty Hall, Enfield 55  
 Foucault, Michel 85  
 Fox, George 74  
 France 131, 169, 174  
 Fry, Roger 153  
 Fuller, R. Buckminster 150  
 the Functional Tradition 146, 151–4, 156–60  
 functionalism 77, 146, 150–3, 159, 177
- Gallowgate, Aberdeen **184**  
 Garden Cities 182  
 gated communities 63  
 geometry 5, 11–12, 14–23, 25, 27–31  
 German, Edward 126  
 Germany 174  
 Gibson, Dan: in Arts and Crafts movement  
     101–3; biography of 100; rosette motif in  
     115–16, **116**; and chimneys 108–9; and  
     house interiors 114–15; and landscape  
     protection 117–19; and local craftsmen  
     110–12; and local traditions 103–5, 120n21;  
     and regionalism 4, 107  
 Gibson, David 185  
 Giedion, Siegfried 155, 167n33  
 Glasgow 174, 185  
 glass 196, 198, 202  
 Gloag, John 123–4, 138  
 Gloag, John 141n1  
 Globe Theatre, London 26  
 Gloucester Circus, Greenwich **66**  
 Gloucester's Tower, Greenwich 55  
 Goose-Pie House, Greenwich 60  
 Gothic 38, 61, 84  
 The Grange, Greenwich 52  
 Graythwaite Hall, Cumbria 106  
 Greater London Council (GLC) 2, 180  
 Greenwich: artistic depictions of 57, **58**;  
     development of 52–3, **53**, 59–60, 63; elite  
     building in 55–6, 61
- Greenwich Park 55  
 Grote's Buildings, Blackheath 65, **66**  
 Grubb, Sarah 74  
 Gwynn, John 64
- Hackness Hall, Yorkshire 83  
 Hackney 52, 191, 195, 200  
 Ham Common Flats, Richmond 159  
 Ham House, Richmond 51  
 Hammersmith 52  
 Hampstead 52  
 Hanwell Asylum 93  
 Harlow 178, 182  
 Hawksmoor 4  
 Hayes, Frank 184  
 Heathgate House, Greenwich 56, **57**  
 Henry VII 130  
 Higgins, Godfrey 92  
 High Satterhow, Cumbria 113  
 Highgate 52, 55  
 Hollamby, Ted 181  
 Holland House, Kensington 51  
 home-based work 189, 191, 194–6, 203–6 *see*  
     *also* live/work buildings  
 home ownership 134, 138  
 homogeneity 146, 176  
 Hong Kong, mass housing in **171**, 175  
 host *see* Mass  
 house, use of term 190  
 housing policy 132–3  
 humanization, conscious 150–1, 153
- Ideal Home Magazine* 128, **129**, 136, **139–40**  
 identity: hybrid 7; places of 4  
 images, religious 36, 43–4  
 independence 127, 130, 135–7, 139–40, 194  
 Independent Group 160, 163  
 individualism 132–3, 135, 148  
 Industrial Revolution 2, 138, 158, 190–1, 195  
 industrialized building 178  
 International Style 154  
 internationalism 3, 151, 156  
 Islington 52
- Johnson-Marshall, Stirrat 176  
 Jones, Inigo 4, 54–5
- Kent 28, 34, 54  
 King's Wharf, Hackney 200, **201**  
 kitchens: in Quaker meetinghouses 80–1, 90;  
     in studio-houses 198; at York Retreat 77,  
     83, 89  
 kitsch 123, 141, 149  
 Klingender, Francis 153–4  
 Koolhaas, Rem 199  
*Kunstgeographie* 146, 154

## Index

- Lake District: architectural tradition of 99–100, 103, 107, 113; craft revival in 109–10, 116; house layouts in 104; influence on Wordsworth 107; landscape protection in 116–18
- Land Act 1589 131–2
- landscape, urban 170
- LCC (London County Council) 170, 177, 180–2, 184–5
- Le Corbusier 177, 198
- Leeds 185
- Leigh Court Barn, Worcestershire 27
- Lillington Gardens, Westminster **178**
- Lincoln Cathedral 5, 160
- Ling, Arthur 182
- Linnaeus, Carl 189–90
- live/work buildings **201**, **204–5**; conflicting programmes in 204–6; function of 200–1, 203–4; history of 191, 194, 196, 198–200; as identifiable type 189–91
- Locke, John 130, 135
- London: depictions of 57; development of suburbs in 50–2, 56; live/work buildings in 195–6, **197**; polarization with rest of UK 175; in post-war period 170
- London vernacular 68
- longhouses 191, **192**
- Lower Brockhampton, Herefordshire 29
- Lydia House, Blackheath **65**
- Lyons 202
- Macartney House, Greenwich **59**
- Maddison, John 17, 31n1
- Maison de Verre, Paris 198–202, **199**, **203**, 205
- Malton, James 127, **128**, 131–2, 140
- mandorla 12–13
- The Manor House, Greenwich 57, **58**
- Marble Hill, Richmond 52
- Marxism 146, 153
- Mason, Reverend William 85
- Mass 36–40, 42–4, **42**
- mass-housing programmes: output and design approaches 179–86; perceptions of 169–70; Tudoresque and 141; in UK 135, 174–5, 177, 179; in Western Europe 170–3
- Matthew, Robert 176, 180
- mechanization, unlimited 150
- medieval houses 9, 35
- Merrie England* 126–7, 135, 138, 141
- Middle Eastern architecture 148
- midstrey 23, 27
- Mills, Hannah 74–5
- Milton Keynes 178
- Mince Pie House *see* Vanbrugh House
- mixed development 177, 180–3, **181**
- Modern Architectural Research Group (MARS) 145
- Modern Movement 147, 153, 169–70, 172–4, 177–8, 198
- modernism 5, 124–5, 145, 149, 153, 163, 172, 176
- modernist realism 154
- modernity 2, 4, 6, 124, 132, 157–8, 170
- Monks' Door, Ely Cathedral 11–12, 14–16, 18, 31n1
- Montague House, Blackheath 59
- Moor Crag 101
- Morris, Robert 57
- Morris, William 106–7, 154
- mortar joints 20
- Mumford, Lewis 153
- Nash, John 125
- nave aisles 11, 33, 36, 38, 40–3, **41**, **45**
- nave floors 11, 16–21, 23–4
- naves: access to 39; in Ely Cathedral 16; as essential features 35; religious images in 44
- Nayland, Suffolk 12, 24, 30
- Ndebele, South Africa 157–8, **157**
- neo-Georgian style 125, 135, 140
- neo-Palladian style 55
- neo-vernacular 3, 5
- New Brutalism 154, 158–9, 162, 164, 176
- New Empiricism 151
- new towns 171–2, 174, 177–8, 180, 182
- New York 200
- Newcastle 183–4
- Nimrod Hut 28
- North, Thomas 184
- North Peckham 178, 184
- Northamptonshire 33, **38**, 40, **41–2**, **45**
- Northern Ireland 174–5, 179, 182
- nostalgia 3–4, 125, 162
- Octagon (Ely Cathedral) 14–15
- Old English 124–5, 127, 131, 170
- Old Maids' Farm, Yorkshire **89**
- Orwell, George 134, 137–8, 141
- Ozenfant, Amédée 198
- Palladianism 6, 49–50, 54, 76, 82–3
- Paragon, Blackheath 65
- parish churches *see* church buildings
- Park Hall, Greenwich **60**
- Park Hill, Sheffield **177**
- parochial chapels *see* church buildings
- patriotism 126–7, 130
- patronage 33–4
- Pauper Lunatic Asylum, Wakefield 92
- peasantry 6, 126, 130–1, 136, 191

- Penn, William 85  
 Pepys, Samuel 56  
 Pevsner, Nikolaus 5, 145–6, 154–6, 167n33, 190  
 Picturesque 124, 126, 164–5, 177, 179–80  
 Pike, Joseph 76, 80  
 Pinder, Wilhelm 154  
 Placentia, Greenwich 52  
 Portakabins **204**  
 Prince's Lodgings, Newmarket 54  
 Prior Crauden's Chapel, Ely Cathedral 12, 21–4, 30  
 Prior's Door, Ely Cathedral **13**  
 processions 36, 42  
 provincialization 6–7  
 Pullwoods, Cumbria 117  
 pupilage system 163  
 pyx 35
- Quaker meetinghouses 77–81, **78–9**, **81**, 90, 92–3  
 Quakers: and architecture 73–4, 76–7, 83–4, 91–3; egalitarian attitudes of 86–9, 91; evolution of practice 93; history of 74; idealization of rural life 85, 89; practices of 75–6; and prison reform 84; as subaltern 6  
 Queen's House, Greenwich 4, 54–5, 62, 67  
 Quinil, Bishop 35
- Rand, Ayn 5  
 Ranger's House, Blackheath 59  
 The Rash, Cumbria 108–9  
 Rathcoole, Northern Ireland **183**  
 Rawnsley, H. D. 110  
 realism 154 *see also* modernist realism; social realism  
 rectors 33–5, 39  
 Red Road Flats, Glasgow **186**  
 regionalism 4, 151; critical 164; self-conscious 107  
 religious practice 35, 43–4 *see also* Mass  
 Renaissance 49, 75  
 Richards, J. M.: on anonymity 145–8, 164; on functionalism 152–3, 158; on national culture 148, 154–6, 160; and cultural continuity 162–3; and hollow victory of modernism 147, 162–3, 165; and social realism 150–1; and tasks of architecture 160, 162  
 Richmond 52, 57  
 Rickman, Thomas 93  
 Rocque, John 51, 60, 62  
 Roehampton **175**  
 Roman occupation of Britain 27–8  
 Romanesque 38  
 rood screens 34  
 roofs, ecclesiastical type 34
- Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (RCHME) 2, 82  
 Ruskin, John 99–100, 105–6, 110–11, 119
- Salisbury Cathedral 36–7  
 San Francisco 191  
 Scotland 2, 174, 178–9, 184–5  
 Searles, Michael 65  
 self-help 162  
 self-reliance 131–2, 135, 140  
 semi-detached houses 24–5, 27, 63, 65, 204  
 Shaw, Norman 127, 196  
 Sheffield 177, 182  
 Sheppard Fidler, Alwyn 183–4  
 Sherwood House, Blackheath **65**  
 Shoreditch 186  
 silk-weavers 191–2, **193–4**, 196, 202  
 Simpson, Arthur W. 110, 113–15  
 slums 133, 172, 177  
 Smithson, Alison and Peter 4, 158, 164, 176–7, 179  
 Snape, Andrew 59  
 social realism 146–7, 149–51, 153–4  
 socialism 133, 154, 182  
 socialist realism 150 *see also* social realism  
 Soierie Vivante, Lyons 202  
 South Africa 157  
 Southwark 184  
 Soviet Russia *see* USSR  
 spandrels 13  
 Sparkes, Joseph 93  
 SSHA (Scottish Special Housing Association) 174–5, 182  
 St John's Church, Windermere 111  
 St Luke's Hospital, London 84, 86–9  
 St Martin's Church, Bowness 115–16  
 Stamp, Gavin 3, 124  
 standardization 172, 176  
 Star of David 14, 18, 22  
 Stirling, James 4, 146, 159  
 Stockbroker's Tudor 128, 138  
 Strawbale House, Islington 199  
 studio-houses 196, 198, 203 *see also* live/work buildings *see also* live/work buildings (bold)  
 subaltern 5–6  
 suburbs: development of in England 50–1; extensions in 61; garden 176; and middle-class individualism 133–5; popular architecture of 124–5; Richards on 148–9; and self-reliance 132  
 Survey of London 2  
 Sutton House, Hackney 51  
 Swakeleys, Middlesex 55
- terraced houses 2, 4, 64, 183, 185, 204  
 Thames 52



## Index

- top-shops 194, 202  
tower blocks 173, 176–8, 180–2, 184–5, 187  
Townend, Cumbria **108**, 113–14  
townscape 68, 146, 164–5  
traditional, and vernacular 2–3  
transepts 17, 36  
transubstantiation 38–9, 43  
Treswell, Ralph 56  
triangulation 14, 21, 23, 27, 31n7  
triforium 12, 14, 24  
Tudor, Henry *see* Henry VII  
Tudoresque, v; architectural history of 124–5;  
    consensus against 123; development of  
    127; and English identity 125–7, 131, 138,  
    140–1; and middle-class individualism  
    135–6; varieties of 136–7  
Tuke, Anne 91  
Tuke, Samuel 75, 91–2  
Tuke, William 75–6, 81, 83–8, 90–1, 95n23  
Twickenham 52  
tympanum 11, 13, 15  
  
United States 153–4, 171, 174  
Upper Tulse Hill Estate, London **181**  
Use of Sarum *see* liturgy  
USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) 147,  
    149–50, 153, 171, 187  
  
Vanbrugh, Sir John 60–2  
Vanbrugh Castle, Greenwich 61–2, **62–3**, 65, 67  
Vanbrugh Fields, Greenwich 60, 62–3  
Vanbrugh House, Greenwich 62  
vernacular: and anonymity 106, 146; and  
    Arts and Crafts movement 106–7,  
    112–13; and church buildings 33–5, 37;  
    and collaboration 111; connotations of  
    1–2; and contextualism, iv 4; and diversity  
    160; of equality 73, 76–7; evolution of  
    tradition 163–4; and experience of religion  
    40; and Functional Tradition 152; industrial  
    156, 159; in Lake District 103, 107, 116;  
    and live/work buildings 196; and mass  
    housing 169–70, 179, 185–6; in medieval  
    architecture 30; and Quaker tradition 76;  
    Richards' interest in 147–8, 154, 162–3;  
    and Tudoresque 141  
Vernacular Architecture Group, iii 3, 6  
vernacular-classical hybridity 61  
  
vernacular studies 3–4, 8, 106, 116, 200  
*vesica piscis* 12–14, **15**, 18–19  
villas: on Blackheath 65; in Greenwich 52, 57,  
    59, 61; as ideal form 49–50; in Lake District  
    114; and suburbs 51–2, 67; use of term 50  
Vitruvius 20, 91  
Voysey, C. F. A. 101–2, 108  
  
wagon roof 34  
Walberswick, Suffolk 34  
Ward, Colin 3, 6  
waste land *see* common land  
watchmakers 194, 202  
Waterhouse, Alfred 93  
Weaver, Lawrence 102–4, 106, 115  
Webster, George 108  
welfare state 175–6, 187  
Westmorland 99–100, 103–4, 114  
White Craggs, Cumbria 100  
White Towers, Greenwich 62  
Williams, Raymond 154, 163–4  
Wimbledon Transitional 138  
windows: in live/work buildings 202; in medieval  
    chancels 35, 38; in Quaker meetinghouses  
    78–9; in York Retreat 88, 91  
Windsor 57  
Wittkower, Rudolf 49–50  
Womersley, Lewis 182  
Woods, Joseph 92–3  
Wordsworth, William 99–100, 105, 107–9, 112,  
    116–17, 119, 121n52  
worship, places of, i 3, 6–7, 40, 77, 80  
  
York, classical buildings in 83–4  
York Lunatic Asylum 74, **75**, 83–5, 89, 92  
York Lunatic Asylum  
York Meetinghouse 78, 83, 92  
York Retreat **73, 81**; classical influences on  
    83–4; designing of 81–3, **82**, 87–8 founding  
    narrative of 74–5; and humanitarian  
    projects 93; layout of 84–6, 88–9; patient  
    lodgings in 90–1; surveillance in 84, 90;  
    as therapeutic environment 73; written  
    accounts of 91–2  
Yorkshire Development Group (YDG) 185  
  
Zeilenbau pattern 173, 177, 180, 185  
Zhdanov, Andrey 149–50, 153, 166n14